

Angele's Fortune

1859

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Sms.' with a large, looping initial 'S'.

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ANGÈLE'S FORTUNE.

FROM THE FRENCH OF
ANDRÉ THEURIET.

AUTHOR OF "THE YOUNG MAUGARS," "GERALD'S MARRIAGE,"
"RAYMONDE," "THE GODSON OF A MARQUIS,"
"ANTOINETTE," ETC., ETC.

TRANSLATED BY MARY NEAL SHERWOOD.

CHAPTER I.

A PAIR OF BLUE EYES.

"AND now, I will introduce you to your fellow-students."

And the lawyer, Boblique by name, the busiest man of his profession in the town of Bay, opened the double doors which divided his private office from the room in which his students and clerks worked, saying, as he did so:

"Gentlemen, this is Monsieur Joseph Toussaint, your future companiou, and my new clerk."

Four curious faces were at once lifted from behind as many desks, and four pairs of eyes inspected the

stranger, who stood unmoved. He was a tall fellow of twenty-five, solidly made, with square shoulders and a general look of strength, but with a dreamy sort of face, which offered a singular contrast to his masculine form. Under his high, wide brow were a pair of soft blue eyes, with a surprised, melancholy look in their depths. His full blonde beard indifferently concealed a large, generous mouth, with well-cut lips, the upper one slightly curved and thin, while the lower was very full. His bright chestnut hair was as badly cut as his clothes, both told the story of a village barber and tailor, testifying to a complete indifference on the part of the young man to matters of toilette.

"He is a perfect Guy," whispered a small, dandified clerk into the ear of his next neighbor."

"He looks like a hard worker," muttered old Sénéchal, who for thirty years had filled the position of head clerk and bookkeeper in this office.

By this time Joseph Toussaint had become somewhat disturbed by the unwinking glare of all these eyes, and he looked down on his hobnailed shoes, the crevice between soles and uppers being still filled with snow, for it was January, and the streets were almost impassable.

"Monsieur Toussaint," continued the lawyer, "will take Jacquemarte's place, and you, Sénéchal, will initiate him in the routine of his work."

As Boblique spoke, he went from desk to desk, looking over the shoulders of the young men, and turning

over the papers. He was small, thin, and as noiseless in his movements as a cat. His bushy head emerged from a voluminous white cravat; he wore blue spectacles, while his complexion was, in color and texture, like old parchment. His face was immovable as ice, and his clerks asserted that he had never been known to smile.

"By the way," he said, turning toward Toussaint, "have you found a lodging yet? No? Very good. Your predecessor lived with Sénéchal, who, I have no doubt, will be glad to receive you on the same terms. Arrange things between yourselves. You can have a holiday, and begin your work to-morrow at eight o'clock. I am punctual myself, and expect the same from those about me."

The Notary returned to his private office, leaving Joseph planted in the centre of the floor. The young man, uncertain what to do, went toward a table which stood a little apart, and was about to take the unoccupied chair, when a gesture from Sénéchal deterred him.

"No, no," said the old man, with a kind smile, "you can't sit there. That place belongs to Monsieur des Arnoises, the amateur clerk. It is true that he is rarely here, but it is his place, all the same. Your desk is nearer me, young man. Sit down there, look over the Directory, and commit to memory the names of the city authorities; it will do you no harm. As soon as I have run over this column of figures, I will be ready to talk with you."

Sénéchal's affable tone reassured the young man, who

opened the Directory, but whose eyes wandered from its pages to examine this large, dingy room, whose aspect was in such entire contrast to the village office he had just left. The four pens scratched monotonously over the shining paper. In a dusty corner the porcelain stove roared comfortably, while outside, the snow was piling up with calm persistence against the windows.

The daylight entered through green glass, and fell on the black, painted desks and the bowed heads of the clerks—upon boxes, stuffed with papers, and huge volumes, from which hung long red threads, put in to mark certain places for reference. On one side were shelves, covered with volumes, which had come down to Boblique from a regular line of predecessors, whose names were inscribed on the backs. All this time, one of the clerks was reading a title-deed aloud to another, who was comparing it with one laid before him. Through the gentle roar of the stove and the rattling of the dry snow against the window, came the sounds of this voice, and a few words, heard at intervals, gave a new turn to Joseph's reflections.

"And René Armand de Sancelôître, dying on November 20th, 1868, at his domain of Rambercourt, bequeathed by will to his grand-nephew, René des Armoises——"

"By the way, what had become of this René?" said the clerk, who had been reading. "He is a rich man now, at all events."

"Rich!" murmured Sénéchal, looking up from his

figures. "Rich!" That depends. His mother has the use of the property for life."

"That makes no difference. When her hour comes, she can't take it with her; and he will never set his foot in this office again."

"Well, our master won't be very sorry. He can't abide amateurs, and he only kept René here on his uncle's account, who had been his best client, you know, for many years."

"What luck some people have," sighed the clerk. "Now, this young man will return to Paris, and write plays for the theatre, and sup with the actresses."

"They certainly know how to spend money, these theatre people. It always melts in their hands."

"Hush! hush! gentlemen," cried Sénéchal, who was going astray with his figures.

The voices dropped, and Joseph thought of this young man—to whom an unexpected legacy had given freedom—with a pang of envy, for he was himself by no means fond of the profession of the law. Having a gentle and contemplative nature, tinged with a little mysticism by five years of seminary life, he was infinitely more interested in lectures and philosophical investigations than in legal or fiscal discussions.

"A lawyer," he said to himself, "is condemned to see life always on the wrong side—in its most ignoble aspect. With each code I copy I am inclined to say to myself 'What is that to me?' But it is of no use to

talk in this way; it is too late. Besides, what would my brother, the Abbé, say?"

The stove kept up its soothing murmur and the snow came more softly against the window, with a rustling sound like wings, while Lawyer Boblique's new clerk continued to dream. His thoughts had wandered to his little village in the heart of Lorraine. He saw the tiny cottages, clustered around the church—the room where he and his brother, the Abbé, had studied together—the garden, blazing with simple flowers, which his sister Geneviève so dearly loved.

The clerk still read aloud, and Joseph's thoughts unwittingly crept back to the uncle, who slept so peacefully, and to that grave in the Cemetery, to which he had not carried any of the treasures enumerated in the inventory, that a prodigal nephew was soon to scatter to the winds.

"And this is life!" thought Joseph, whose mind inclined to philosophical comparisons. "Each of us thinks he is playing a necessary part before a crowd of attentive spectators, and acts only a most unimportant rôle, which Death interrupts, and the end of all, is a roughly-made coffin, followed by a dozen indifferent spectators —"

"Well, young man, are you asleep over the Directory?"

In considerable confusion, Joseph started up, and saw that the head clerk was standing by his side, all dressed and ready for departure. Sénéchal was wrapped

in an ample coat, lined with fur and having a wide collar. He was putting on a heavy pair of woollen gloves. His neck was rather short and totally disappeared in the heavy fur collar. His face was red and jovial; his eyes were blue, round and bright; his nose was straight, and his lips healthy and red, parting in a perpetual smile, which showed two rows of nice white teeth. There was something quite attractive in this man's face.

"It wants ten minutes of twelve," he said. "We shall have time to call at your inn for your luggage, so that you will be able to settle yourself entirely to-day."

They went out. The snow had ceased, and as they walked, Monsieur Sénéchal informed Joseph Toussaint of the conditions on which he had taken his predecessor to board. They were simple and modest, and suited the slender purse of the young man, who at once accepted them. On leaving the inn, they crossed the market place, and, suddenly, Monsieur Sénéchal, who had been walking at a rapid pace, stopped at the window of a shop wherein were displayed galantines, dark with truffles, sausages from Arles, dainty bird pies and a Strasbourg patê. His round eyes dilated, his nostrils swelled and a smile hovered on his lips.

"Ah! ah! young man, what do you think of this?"

Joseph, whose gastronomical tastes were as scantily developed as those connected with his toilette, did not in the least understand his companion's enthusiasm, and was quite unmoved by this display of comestibles.

"Just look at these pears," continued Monsieur Sénéchal; "they make my mouth water. And those truffles! And, by Jove! there is a woodcock, the very first I have seen." He stood for a moment, as if undecided.

• "That is the game I prefer. Which do you like best?"

"I!" answered Joseph, whose feet were beginning to feel excessively cold, and who was growing very impatient; "I don't care. At table, I never know the difference between a partridge and a pigeon."

"Is that so? Well, then, that decides me. Wait a moment."

Monsieur Sénéchal rushed into the shop, and came out again in a moment with a triumphant air. "I have bought it!" he exclaimed, showing a little bundle, from which protruded the bird's long beak. "We will make a delicious salmi of it to-night, to celebrate your arrival."

They walked on, but as they drew near la Rue des Savonnaires, where the head clerk resided, he walked more slowly and his face indicated a certain anxiety. As they crossed the little bridge opposite the Church des Augustins, he showed Joseph a house, directly on the canal.

"There," he said, you can see one side of our house, and from this spot you can even distinguish the windows of your room. The place is not very gay, to be sure, but, as soon as you get accustomed to it, you

will like the quiet, I think, and you can hear vespers every night without moving out of your chair."

Joseph stood still and examined with interest each detail of this singularly picturesque corner of the little town of Bay. The arm of the river fed an infinite number of factories on either bank—tanneries, cotton-mills and wash-houses. On either side, too, of the narrow canal threading the town, rose quaint old buildings, whose galleries terminated in quaintly-carved gargoyles, and whose sloping roofs overhung the dark waters, which ran, sometimes placidly, under the arch of a bridge, or bubbled and foamed around a mill wheel. These swelling façades, green with mould, stood opposite each other, pierced with rare windows, while the canal ran black below. Occasionally, a worm-eaten balcony, a footbridge overgrown with moss, and a high platform, hung with tawny skins and piled with tan, broke the monotony of the lines. In summer, when the level rays of the setting sun momentarily lighted up this obscurity, it brought out marvels of color. Golden shafts of light flashed through the arches; the dull water glowed with a rosy flush, which was reflected on the greenish walls, and the foam around the mill wheels was bright with prismatic hues.

In winter, on days like the one on which Joseph Toussaint first beheld the place, the scene was very different, but no less picturesque. Slender icicles fringed the roofs and hung from the jaws of the gargoyles. Ice, too, had bound the mill wheels; snow

lay in heaps against the walls, while the canal was bathed in a clear, blue light, like that pervading some mysterious Norwegian grotto.

"The place pleases me," said Joseph, at last, with a slightly German intonation.

"Let us hurry," answered Monsieur Sénéchal, "for the clock is striking and we are late."

The entrance of the house was on La Rue des Savonnaires. The noise made by the two clerks as they went in, was evidently heard, for a door was burst open at the end of the corridor, some one made a rush at Monsieur Sénéchal, and, in the darkness, Joseph heard two kisses resound on the cheeks of the old gentleman, while a rich contralto voice exclaimed :

"How late you are ! Your soup will not be fit to eat."

When Sénéchal had returned these caresses, he stepped aside, and Toussaint, whose eyes were by that time accustomed to the darkness of the corridor, saw, standing in the half-open door, a girl, in all the fresh beauty of her nineteen years.

"This is my daughter Angèle," said the old clerk.

The young man was so confused by the superb blue eyes which were riveted upon him that he forgot to bow.

"And this, my child, is Monsieur Toussaint. He not only takes Jacquemarte's place at the office, but here also. His trunk will be here presently."

The young girl glanced at the new comer, and an odd smile moved just one corner of her lips.

"He has just come from the country," continued the old gentleman, as he suddenly pulled the woodcock out from under his cloak, "and was kind enough to bring us this bird, which we will eat to-night in a salmi."

At these words Joseph started, and with the greatest difficulty restrained a cry of surprise. He opened his eyes in astonishment, while Angèle looked, first at her father and then at the woodcock, with an air of mischievous incredulity.

"He killed it," affirmed Monsieur Sénéchal, pinching the youth's arm severely to make him speak. Joseph at last understanding what was expected of him, stammered out:

"Yes, certainly—yes"—at the same time coloring to the tips of his ears.

"Take it to the pantry," continued the clerk, "and pray say nothing to your mother, until I have left the house."

Angèle shrugged her shoulders, looked knowingly at her father, and said as she took the bird:

"My mother is out; she has gone to my aunt's, and will not return until night."

She proceeded to lay another place at the table, while Monsieur Sénéchal, comforted apparently by hearing of his wife's absence, began to whistle gayly, as he took off his gloves and his cloak.

The dinner, however, was a silent one, notwithstanding his cheerfulness. Angèle was making up her mind

in regard to the new boarder, and he being very hungry as well as very timid, eat much and said little. When they rose from the table Monsieur Sénéchal took Joseph all over the house—from the attic to the cellar—and finally installed him in the room he was to occupy, with considerable solemnity. This room went in the family by the name of "the clerk's chamber," and was high up and poorly furnished, but Joseph, who had never been spoiled by luxury, found it very habitable. The one window, with its wide stone sill, looked down on the canal, and upon one side of the old church. This pious neighborhood, and the rush and splash of the water, quite won the young man's heart, and he unpacked his trunk in a most contented spirit.

He placed his modest library on the table—his one or two law books—Pascal and the Bible. Then he hung up over the chimney, photographs of his family. When all was in order, he discovered that his fire had gone out, and that the room was rapidly becoming very cold. He therefore thought he would go out and warm his chilled limbs by a rapid walk. As he passed through the corridors he saw the door of the dining-room open, and Angèle standing at a table near the window ironing. Joseph hesitated, divided between the desire to talk with his young hostess, and the fear of seeming intrusive. He finally decided that it was best for him to go on, but at that moment Angèle, who was singing like a mocking bird, looked up, and bade him come in.

"One question sir," she said abruptly, "did not my father buy that woodcock?"

"Really"—stammered Toussaint, considerably disconcerted.

"Own up now! I am quite familiar with all papa's little ways. He is a perfect epicure; gluttony, in fact, is his pet sin, and when I was a little girl I have many a time been his accomplice, just as you were this morning."

"Then, Mademoiselle, since you insist, I will tell you that you are right, and also that I am none too well pleased at having been made to tell a falsehood."

"Which you must nevertheless keep up," cried Angèle, "and with spirit too, unless you would have a scene at supper. Mamma spoiled me, and would eat dry bread for the sake of giving me a new dress, but she has not the smallest patience, when luxuries of this kind are brought into the house. Promise me faithfully that you will keep up this deception."

"I promise"—

"Remember," she said, "that you are not to blush either, as you did this morning!" and she lifted a warning forefinger. "I knew the truth just by looking at you, and mamma is quite as shrewd as I, in such matters."

"Truly!" They looked at each other, and both laughed merrily.

The ice was broken, and the young man mentally congratulated himself at this semi-complicity, and flattered himself that it was the beginning of a pleasant intimacy. Angèle bade him take a seat near the

stove, which Joseph gladly did, as his hands were nearly frozen. He was at a loss, however, to open a conversation, and as he sat rubbing his hands he longed to say something, and pined for an inspiration.

Angèle had returned to her ironing. Sometimes she stooped over a large basket, and then standing on tip-toe, would lean over the table, in her efforts to reach the further end of the long muslin curtain with her iron. Her slender figure swayed as she slowly moved her arm up and down. The light coming through the window, fell on the massive braids of her brown hair—touched the tip of one shell-like ear, and tinged with gold the tiny curls on her neck. When one curtain was finished and folded she turned toward a clothes-horse and hung it carefully to air, and then Joseph saw her features, like the profile of a medallion—her fair brow and drooping lids—her straight nose, beautiful mouth, and delicately rounded chin. She was tall, well made, and spirited in movement. Every attitude was graceful, unstudied and harmonious, and spoke of health, and plenitude of animal spirits and an intense vitality which was absolutely irresistible. Angèle was demonstrative, talkative and enthusiastic. It was she, therefore, who naturally spoke first, and came to the assistance of the taciturn Joseph.

“Is this the first time you have been in this town, Monsieur Toussaint?” she asked, as she held an iron to her cheek to test its heat.

“I have a country air, I suppose?” asked Joseph,

curiously, "I have lived five years of my life at Nancy, nevertheless, but all the rest of the time, I have been in the village with my brothers."

"Is your family large?"

"There are eleven of us," he said, a little disturbed at being obliged to make such an avowal, "and they all live at Albestroff except my brother, the Abbé, and myself. Albestroff is a tiny village, surrounded by forests."

"How I should loathe it!" cried Angèle, without any ceremony.

"No, you would not," answered Joseph, with an air of conviction; "Albestroff is a dear old place, where every one goes to bed at nine, and rises at six. It is a real home—sunny and bright—flowers and fresh air! There are sparkling brooks in every direction, the road to the barn is covered with fine white sand, and there is a great parlor where we are told we are not allowed to smoke—and yet where we always do—all the same! No, no, you are mistaken! you would not dislike Albestroff! It is a place that one pines for, as soon as one has left it!"

"You certainly are not much like one of your future companions in the office, whose only idea is always to get away from his home, although it is a most comfortable one."

"And who is that?"

"René des Armoises."

"Ah, yes! the young man who has just inherited a

fortune. But I have heard him spoken of as rather a scatter-brain!"

"You will lose that notion when you know him," cried Angèle, putting down her iron energetically, and turning toward her companion. "He is the nicest fellow in the world! so clever, too! He is a thorough musician, and rides horseback like an angel! He is a poet also, and has published some verses which I know by heart. He will be celebrated some day, and will make this town famous as his birth-place!"

"Fame," said Toussaint, sententiously, as he shook his head, "is a star which rises only when we are in our tombs. Besides, verses amount to nothing—in these days!"

Joseph was, in his heart, a little jealous at the animation with which the girl spoke of René des Armoises, whom she seemed to admire so much.

"He does more than write verses," she replied, piqued by her companion's disdainful tone; "he has written plays, too."

"An author, is he?" answered Joseph. "How many do you think fail, for every one that succeeds?" He relapsed into silence for a moment, and then, as if a little ashamed of himself, added: "But it is, nevertheless, a splendid thing to hear our own words and ideas, drop from the lips of living beings, and see them stalking about in magnificent clothing, before thousands of spectators, who weep or laugh as the actors will."

"Yes, indeed," interrupted Angèle, enthusiastically,

"and the orchestra! and then the applause—hands clapping simultaneously, as if they belonged all to one person. That is magnificent!"

"You like the theatre, then?"

"Like it! No, I adore it!" and then she added with a heavy sigh: "And yet I have never been allowed to put my foot inside one, since I was nine years old. Before that my mother often took me to the little one here. I listened with my heart as well as my ears. It was not joy I felt, it was simple ecstasy. All I saw and heard remained in my head, and I took to walking in my sleep in the middle of the night, and declaiming. Then papa got frightened, and said it would never do; that it was too great an excitement; that my nerves would suffer; and, in short, he forbade my going to the theatre."

"And he was quite right," answered Joseph, startled at the way in which she spoke.

"Yes, but I shall go, all the same," she muttered between her teeth.

"How will you manage it?"

"Ah! that is my secret!" she answered, with an important little air.

"Come now," cried the young man, with a good-natured laugh, confide in me; we have one secret now, let us add another to the woodcock."

"But you must swear never to breathe one word of it to my father! Well, then, ever since the day when he declared that I should never enter a theatre again, I

have had but one idea, and that was, to go to Paris and see some really good actors; so I began to save all the gold pieces which were given to me on my birthday—at New Year's—and when the vintage was especially fine. Of course I was obliged to be very patient, and to practice considerable self-denial, but in nine years I have saved quite a little sum; then, too, my mother has helped me."

"And how much have you in your money-box?" asked Joseph, amused and interested by the girl's story.

"I do not know; I have never dared to look, but it is very heavy. On my twentieth birthday I shall open it. Then I shall coax my father to let my mother and me go to Paris, and we will just live at the theatre!"

She moved her iron nervously over the muslin curtain, and tossed her head with an impatient movement. Joseph began to feel inspired by her enthusiasm.

"Just think of it!" she said, turning quickly toward him. Think of seeing the Opera, and going to the Français—hearing music and poetry in a beautiful room, blazing with lights and glittering with toilettes! Oh! Paris!" she cried, absolutely carried off her feet by excitement. "The cards have predicted that I shall find my fortune! Do you believe in cards, Monsieur Toussaint?"

As Joseph was about to reply, a woman's voice was heard in the corridor.

"It is my mother," said Angèle, and then added rapidly: "Remember what you are to say at supper."

Madame Sénéchal was a little woman, as round as a bolster, and quick as a flash, having a still fresh complexion, slightly marked with smallpox. Her air was that of a woman of the people, her eyes were restless and crafty, and her tongue always ready to reply. Bareheaded at all seasons of the year, she wore her scanty hair drawn back from her face, *à la Chinoise*, and wound in a tight little knot at the back of her head. She was always hard at work, paying little attention to her toilette. The only relaxation she allowed herself, was sometimes of a winter evening, she lay on a lounge wrapped in a loose dressing gown, and read a novel. Novels were her only passion, and from them her uncultured mind had acquired some strange chimerical notions.

She adored her daughter. Headstrong and passionate toward every body else, Madame Sénéchal was completely ruled by Angèle, for whom she considered nothing too beautiful; and to find the wherewithal to buy a new gown for the young girl, her mother would willingly have put the whole family on bread and water for a week. It is, therefore, easy for my readers to picture to themselves the wrath with which Monsieur Sénéchal's extravagant indulgence of his epicurean tastes were received by her, and also the agony with which, that evening, the good man fidgetted on his chair, when Angèle brought in the salmi which exhaled a most appetizing odor.

"My dear," he said, in his pleasant, flute-like voice,

"It is a woodcock from Meuntrie, shot by Monsieur Toussaint."

Madame Sénéchal glanced at Joseph's dreamy face—which had as little of the expression of a Nimrod as could well be imagined—then with another glance at her husband of distrust and suspicion, she said to the young clerk, in her sharp, decided tones:

"I congratulate you, sir, on being such a good shot!"

"I, Madame?" murmured Joseph, losing his self-possession at the sarcastic inflexion of this terrible woman.

"He has got no sense—no sense whatever"—thought Monsieur Sénéchal, as he unfolded his napkin, and bowed his head to the impending storm.

Suddenly Joseph looked up, and beheld two blue eyes looking fixedly upon him. They said to him with perfect distinctness—

"Courage! my friend, courage!"

"I was lucky on that occasion," he said, in a firm voice, "that fellow I shot just at dawn; as a general thing I can't boast of my skill with powder and shot."

Monsieur Sénéchal drew a long breath. The girl's face expressed profound gratitude, and Joseph was overjoyed to feel that between himself and the young girl, there was a secret understanding even on so trivial a subject.

That night the young clerk dreamed, for the first time in his life, of a pair of blue eyes.

CHAPTER II.

INVITED TO DINNER.

ONE afternoon, Joseph Toussaint was busy in the office writing. As he copied page after page, his eyes occasionally rested on the vacant desk of the amateur clerk.

"Shall I never see this Monsieur des Armoises?" he thought.

Since his first interview with the fair Angèle, the recollection of what she had said of this mysterious René, had often come back to him, and he had grown excessively curious in regard to this only son, who had wealth and good looks, who wrote poetry, and, "who rode horseback like an angel."

"I am certain," he said, "that I shall be disappointed in him. Nevertheless, I should really like to make his acquaintance."

Suddenly the office door was burst open, as if by a whirlwind, and a young man wrapped in a heavy fur coat entered. He shook hands cordially with Monsieur Sénéchal, with a merry laugh, and exchanged a friendly good morning with the other clerks.

Joseph straightened himself up a little, and examined the new comer with keen attention. René des Armoises threw his overcoat on a table, and then went to the

stove, standing with his back toward it and talking as fast as possible. He was apparently about twenty-four, tall and well made, elegantly but very simply dressed. His brown eyes were frank and clear, his broad forehead and crisp curls spoke of intellect and strength. The imperious expression of the upper part of the face was corrected by the joyous smiles of a somewhat sensual mouth, which was half concealed by a heavy black beard—the tout ensemble irresistibly reminded one of the energetic, passionate physiognomy of the bust of Lucius Verus, to be seen at the Louvre. In the manners of the young man, there was a certain ease and dash which pleased Joseph, while at the same time it disconcerted him.

At this moment Lawyer Boblique opened the door of his private office, nodded to René, and asked Tous-saint if his papers were ready. He ran them hastily over:—

“Very well,” he said, “Beaurain is ill and confined to the house. Take this paper to him for his signature, and remember that you must not leave without the money. You will go with Monsieur des Armoises, who will show you the way to Le Chânois. It is a fine day,” added the lawyer, turning toward René, “and the walk will do you good.”

René bowed, and put on his coat, while Joseph folded the papers. The two young men were soon outside, and rapidly passing through the town found themselves soon on the road which leads to the Plaine de Viel.

It was clean walking, for the snow of the previous week had been well trodden, and was now frozen hard.

"Do you smoke?" asked des Armoises, extending to Toussaint a cigar case.

"Thank you," replied the country boy awkwardly. "I have my pipe."

He filled it slowly, while René lighted a cigar, with a little shrug of the shoulders which seemed to say: "He is a bear, but after all, what do I care!"

The two young men walked on in silence. Joseph was excessively anxious to hear his companion talk, having promised himself, on starting, to have that amusement, but it was not so easy a thing as he fancied.

René seemed to be thoroughly indifferent to his companion. He looked at the landscape, hummed an opera air, and replied by the briefest monosyllables, to Toussaint's infrequent remarks. It was in this fashion that they reached the Farm du Chânois where Lawyer Boblique's client dwelt. He was a farmer who was always behind hand with his rent, and the owner of the premises threatened to turn him out.

Before the threats and the papers brought by Joseph, the sick and recreant debtor wilted entirely, and the gold pieces were reluctantly counted down.

"Another victim of Boblique's!" said René, as they turned their faces homeward.

"Are you in earnest," cried Joseph, coloring at these words.

"Am I in earnest? Well, rather! You do not know

your master yet, and have little idea of the ingenuity with which he gathers in the money of other people. You are new in the office—it is easy to see that! And how do you think you shall like the business?"

"Not at all," answered Toussaint in a dreamy tone. "I came here because my elder brother desired it, but I begin to dislike it intensely."

"Is that so? I did just the same thing. I entered Boblique's office to please an old uncle, whose heir I have since become. Now that I am my own master, back I go to Paris, and in three months shall again begin to live, as I understand the word."

"And how do you understand it?" asked Joseph.

"By living, I mean movement. A life filled with a succession of passionate emotion. Novelty is as necessary to me as bread, and fills me with an energy that here I never feel."

"How tastes differ!" exclaimed Joseph. "What I like, is absolute and entire solitude. A solitude filled with books. A quiet country village, or a farm house shut in by trees, undisturbed by a sound, except from the poultry yard. That is what I enjoy! I adore nature, and I never tire of the same scene."

"You are a dreamer then," remarked René, looking at Joseph with more interest than before.

"And you a poet!" replied Toussaint, with a smile.

"Who told you so?"

"Monsieur Sénéchal's daughter, who knows your verses by heart."

"Ah! Mademoiselle Angèle!" exclaimed René, highly gratified. "She is a very pretty girl. I hope you are paying your court to her."

"I!" stammered Joseph. "I shall never take the liberty."

"And why not?" interrupted des Armoises. "You should adore all that is adorable—beautiful women—luminous skies—glowing colors. Look! is not that magnificent!"

And he pointed out to his companion the white and sunny plain stretched before them. In a hollow lay the farm house they had just left, from its chimneys rose a light bluish smoke—beyond, the wooded hills overlapped each other, and their last outlines were lost in a soft grey mist.

"This silent symphony is exquisite," resumed René. All these varied tones are in perfect unison, and the clear blue of the sky harmonises with the forest, whose every twig clothed in ice, takes a bluish tinge. How beautiful!"

He was evidently sincere as he gazed, his eyes flashed with enthusiasm, and he threw back his shoulders and drank in the fresh, keen air with delight.

Joseph watched him in mute surprise. Far off on the plain were seen two women bending under the weight of their fagots of dead wood. They moved slowly over the snow, and when they reached the highway, one of them sat down near the young men to rest. She was old and decrepit, long locks of

gray hair fell over her wrinkled cheeks, her eyes had the mournful expression of a beast of burthen, and her gaunt form tottered under the burthen she bore.

Joseph looked at her sadly, and walked on, thoughtfully.

• "That old woman has an immortal soul, as well as ourselves," he said, sadly, to des Armoises. "She has had nothing in this life. What think you, will be her fate in the next world — will the deprivations here be made up to her there? I confess, that troubles me sometimes."

René uttered a long, low whistle.

"What a strange fellow!" he thought.

"Life is too short," he said, aloud, "for us to spend it in guessing riddles. Philosophical problems fatigue the mind uselessly; the contemplation of sordid realities, weighs down the imagination. I don't like to wade in the mud myself, with the rain pouring down my back."

"Good heavens!" cried Joseph, lifting his eyes in astonishment to heaven.

"All artists and poets are alike," he continued. "You pitilessly cut all the chords of humanity which do not vibrate according to your own fancies. You have no conception of Duty, it seems to me."

"Duty!" replied René, with a laugh. "Duty is a scarecrow placed in the field of dreams, to frighten away the poet who ventures to pluck forbidden fruit." And the young man looked about him with an air of haughty defiance.

"Our strongest duty, we owe to ourselves," he said, slowly, "and to Art—and Art can only be developed through the imagination—which necessarily tramples on conventional prejudices."

Joseph turned and looked at his companion with a sort of fear. René's haughty profile was clearly cut against the red of the sunset sky. He was forced, in spite of himself, to admire the young man, and he felt a certain sympathy with his enthusiasm and strength of will. This silent admiration was not lost on René, and influenced him in favor of Toussaint, who after a short silence, said :

"Your words upset all my preconceived opinions. You have not convinced me, and yet, I am silent. A simple village youth can not argue with a student like yourself."

René laughed and clapping his companion on the shoulder, he said, gayly :

"You are an original! I like you. Let us be friends."

By this time, they had reached an elevation which commanded the town. Twilight was creeping gently over the scene. On the side of the town where the manufactories all lay, the forges shone brightly, and rows of windows were lighted, one after another. The far off hills were lost in the mist, and the notes of a hand organ came toward them on the breeze.

"Let us be friends!" repeated René. "And to inaugurate our friendship, you will come home to-night

and dine with me. I will present you to my mother, show you my books, and sing for you."

This promise of friendship, this unexpected hospitality, touched Joseph. He consented at once to the proposition, saying that he must, however, hand the money to lawyer Boblique, and notify Monsieur Sénéchal.

"I will not leave you," said René, gayly; and he did, in fact, accompany Joseph to the office, and then to la Rue des Savonnaires, and finally took the young man to his home, in the best part of Bay.

"Dear mother!" he said, as he entered a salon where a lady sat with her work, at the corner of the fire, "this is one of my fellow clerks, Monsieur Tous-saint. We have had a long walk together in the snow, and have sworn eternal friendship on the way—a friendship now to be cemented by a good dinner and a good fire."

"You are very welcome, sir," said Madame des Armoises, rising with an air which was both courteous and haughty.

While René kissed his mother with demonstrative affection, Joseph stood looking at this tall, elegant woman, whose beauty was unmarred by Time, and whose fifty years were indicated only by a becoming *embonpoint*. He recognized in the broad brow, brown eyes and firmly chiselled lips, the same intellect which was the predominant characteristic of her son's face. Only, with the mother, the imperious expression was not tempered by his laughing lips and jocund air.

Notwithstanding all her efforts to be affable, Madame des Armoises was imperious in every gesture, word and movement.

While René asked his mother what she had been doing all day, Joseph looked about the salon with its thick, soft carpets, heavy hangings and family portraits, all of which, in his eyes, indicated princely luxury; and when, in the dining-room, he saw the table with its flowers and glittering silver, softly lighted by a lamp hung from the ceiling, he mentally compared it to the Sénéchal establishment. As his hand touched the satiny damask, he involuntarily thought of the plebeian varnished cloth at Madame Sénéchal's.

All was novel to him here, — the arrangement of the table, the chafing dishes, the very way in which René and his mother used their forks and broke their bread. He looked on in wonder at the attentions Madame des Armoises lavished on her son, whom she worshiped and spoiled.

If the table was gay with flowers in the middle of January, it was because René could not exist without flowers; that wine which they drank from glasses frail and delicate as bubbles, was René's wine. As to René himself, he seemed to move in this atmosphere of attention like a fish in water. He allowed himself to be adored, emptied his glass gayly, and uttered witticism after witticism, which his mother, in her turn, drank as if it were the choicest wine, and which finally, did their work of intoxication on Joseph himself. So great was

the effect produced on the somewhat lethargic nature of Joseph, that when dinner was over and his happy host went out for a moment to light the fire in his own sanctum, his guest burst out involuntarily and as if he were alone :

• “A most rich and generous nature !”

“Ah !” said Madame des Armoises, whose heart was at once won, “you recognize his talent, do you not ?”

“Yes,” answered Joseph, “I do indeed. But, dear Madame, you spoil him. His life cannot always be as happy as it is now.”

“He can at all events,” she answered, “look back on these days with me, as having been days of unalloyed bliss.” She then went on to say how much she loved her only son. She had been early left a widow, and had never wished to marry again. “No one,” she added, “should come between her and her boy. She wished,” she said, “to see him famous and well married; and yet,” she added, with a smile, “I know I should be horribly jealous of any woman whom he loved.”

Joseph thought with a pang of this mother love, and remembered that he, the last of the eleven Toussaints, had lost his mother when he was less than a year old.

When they had finished their coffee, René took him to his den, as he called the charming room where were his piano and his books, and played to him for an hour.

“Well,” said the poet, when Toussaint rose to depart, “are you sorry you came ?”

“I am very glad,” answered Joseph, in his strongest

German accent, for when he was moved by emotion, he relapsed into his provincial intonation. "There are two men in me—the dreamer and the savage. I am glad that you divined the one under the skin of the other."

He returned to his lodgings, subjugated and enchanted.

"Yes, we are friends," he said, some days later, in reply to Angèle's questions. Then he added, in his picturesque phraseology, "we are friends, although he is far cleverer than I; but I have more heart than he has. His glass is always full of sparkling, foaming wine, while I only pour into mine a little claret. It may have an earthy flavor, but it is warming and strengthening. Sometimes we may change our glasses, and to do so occasionally, will be mutually advantageous."

In fact, after this first interview, the two men became very intimate, and René often went to la Rue des Savonnaires to find Toussaint; but he also went at hours when he knew his friend must be in the office. Under pretext of waiting for him, he would take a chair in the room where Angèle sat sewing, with her mother. René had the faculty of being thoroughly at ease with people of all stations in life, and also of putting them equally at their ease. He, therefore, soon conquered Madame Sénéchal's heart. He liked to make Angèle talk, and found infinite amusement in her girlish enthusiasm. Knowing that she had learned his verses, he made her repeat them, corrected her whenever her

interpretation did not satisfy him, and applauded gayly when she followed his instruction.

Madame Sénéchal listened to her daughter with pleasure, with no comprehension of the words she uttered, however, but she delighted in any opportunity of displaying her daughter's talents. After René's departure, the girl would often go to the window, and, with her forehead pressed to the glass, would listen to the monotonous swash of the water, and never realize that night had come, so bright was the light of hope within herself.

Thanks to Des Armoises, Joseph was becoming quite a polished member of society. René took him to the theatre, to dinners and assemblies, and introduced him everywhere as his friend. Toussaint, however, found little enjoyment in this exciting life. He was really happier in the Sénéchal mansion, with Angèle and her mother, than anywhere else. After supper, Monsieur Sénéchal, who was in mortal dread of apoplexy, always went out to walk. Joseph then read aloud to the two women, who worked at their embroidery, and whose bent heads nearly touched each other under the shaded lamp.

It was so restful there, with the doors shut, the curtains drawn close, and the dash of the water under the windows.

At nine o'clock, Monsieur Sénéchal returned, his pockets stuffed with chestnuts. Taking a penknife, he carefully cut a slit in the side of each, and laid them on

the top of the stove—their crackling and snapping making an accompaniment to Joseph's reading. By degrees the tempting odor of the roasting chestnuts filled the room—the old clerk brought out a bottle of wine, and the four ate their simple supper, amid jests and laughs. Madame Sénéchal, softened by the wine, would then bring out a pack of cards and, with the greatest gravity, proceed to tell Angèle's fortune, the girl listening, with heightened color and bated breath.

There was always a stranger, who would come from a great distance and bring with him much wealth.

"And, after all," said Madame Sénéchal, when her husband laughed at her, "there would be nothing so very strange in that. My grandfather had an uncle, who went away, a great many years ago, to the East Indies. Who knows that he did not become rich? that he did not have descendants? and that we shall not hear of them yet? Much stranger things than that have happened, we all know!"

Joseph listened to all this, and, as he looked at the young girl, wished, with all his heart, that the stranger from a great distance, would come with a fortune for the pretty creature.

He had become each day more and more interested in Angèle, who had finally taken possession of his heart. Up to this time women had played no part in Joseph's life—in fact, he had known none save his sister Genéviève—consequently, all the region of feminine love was

to him like those white spaces on geographical maps marked "*unexplored countries.*" Since he had taken up his abode in the Sénéchal mansion, he fancied that he had made some little advances in his explorations of this unknown land.

• Angèle has fascinated him without any premeditation on her part. She had treated him precisely as she had treated his predecessor—with gay indifference—but even that, was enough to make Joseph quite happy. He belonged to that very small class in this world who give much and ask little. His imagination had the property, like certain lenses, of tripling the rays which passed through them.

The smallest friendly word assumed to him, the proportions of a caress. A smile from Angèle kept him warm all day, and at night, when he went up to his dingy room after pressing her hand, he passed a wakeful, but happy night. His favorite dream was of a tiny house at Alberstroff, with a garden full of fruit trees. He saw this cottage, and always with a blue-eyed woman, in a white dress, standing in the doorway.

This was Joseph's castle in the air.

This household seemed all to lean toward castles in the air, for they were built by all its members. It was as if the fogs from the canal were favorable for the construction of these shadowy edifices. Within their alcove Monsieur Sénéchal and his wife spent many an hour, edifying each other with stories. The old clerk's castles were possibly a little common-place, but they

were square and solid, while those of his wife were frail and delicate, but rose to immeasurable heights. Unfortunately, however, a staircase was generally lacking, and one could ascend them only with wings. The husband and wife agreed only on one point—the castle of each, was built for Angèle's exclusive use.

Monsieur Sénéchal wished her to marry a good, honest, steady fellow like Joseph Toussaint, but his wife heard his plebeian name with a shudder. She wanted a more distinguished son-in-law—a man of the world—an artist—some one, in fact, like Monsieur des Armoises. That was the kind of man whom Angèle ought to marry.

Thereupon Monsieur Sénéchal would shrug his shoulders, fly into a passion, and exclaim:

“Are you crazy? He should not marry Angèle were his fortune twice what it is! A scatterbrain—a hanger on at the theatres, who will ruin himself sooner or later, and all who belongs to him.”

In the meantime, this scatterbrain of whom the old clerk stood in such mortal terror, was conspiring quietly to take Angèle to a subscription ball, of which he was one of the managers. He had thrown off his mourning for his uncle, and before leaving for Paris he wished to have “one more jolly time,” as he phrased it, in Bay.

Joseph, led away by the prospect of a waltz with Angèle, entered into the plot, and had even invested his savings in a dress coat. Up to this time he had

looked upon this as an extravagance, but the idea of dancing with Angèle impelled him to the rash deed. Angèle's toilette had been secretly prepared, for more than a fortnight, when Monsieur Sénéchal reluctantly gave his consent, and then only on condition that he should not be made to go. It was therefore with her mother and Joseph that Angèle entered the public ball-room. She was simply but freshly dressed in white tarletan.

Madame Sénéchal, gorgeous in a flame-colored silk, held her head high, happy in her anticipation of the effect which her daughter's beauty would excite.

Angèle, who had never before been at a ball, was enchanted at the lights, the flowers and the toilettes. Hardly was she seated, than the orchestra played a waltz, and Toussaint offered his arm. The girl would have been glad to make her débût with a more brilliant partner, but she had given her word to Joseph, and they took their places. The young man had declared that he could waltz, and well, but after a few turns the poor fellow found himself embarrassed among the trains—elbowed, and knocked, and lost the time completely. No notion had he, however, of giving up—waltz he would—and he dragged the unfortunate Angèle along in spite of her protestations.

At this moment René passed them.

"Will you not give me a turn," he said, and without the smallest ceremony, he slipped his arm round the girl's waist and bore her off from the astonished Joseph,

who stood looking after the pair as they glided around the room.

"Yes! he does dance better than I!" said Toussaint, bravely.

It was a pleasure to see them, and they talked as they danced.

"I have never danced with you before, Mademoiselle," murmured René.

"Nor will you again, as you are about to leave Bay. When are you going?"

"On Sunday," and as he spoke his eyes sparkled, so pleased was he at the thought of seeing Paris once more.

"How happy you look! You will forget Bay and its inhabitants," she added with a half sigh.

"You are mistaken. I never forget my friends, and I shall often think of the old house in La Rue de Savonnaires, where the water ripples so softly under the windows."

"Truly?" she said, and her face brightened. The waltz was over. He took her back to her place, and she sat with thoughts far away from the scene before her, watching him as he moved about the room. She regarded him as a demigod, and almost wondered at his condescension in mingling with the common herd, and accepting their admiration.

The ball was at its height, when about midnight an event occurred, which was the precursor of many events in the calm monotonous society of Bay, which are talked of even to this day.

A quadrille was just over and the centre of the ball-room was unoccupied, when an old lawyer named Bouillard came in. This gentleman had never been seen at a ball before, but the general astonishment at his entrance was heightened by seeing with him a stranger whose general air and dress made a great impression.

"Permit me," said the lawyer to one of the managers, "to present to you, Monsieur Gaspard La Genevraie, a celebrated traveller who comes now from Java, having just been round the world for the second time."

The stranger bowed with a haughty air, throwing out his full chest, and hollowing in the waist which was still slender, although he was at least fifty years old. His pearl gray pantaloons looked as if he were melted and run into them, being literally without a wrinkle. His coat was turned back with velvet in the style of 1830, and gave him the look of one of the lions, celebrated by Balzac, and illustrated by Gavarni. His cravat of white silk was loosely knotted under a turn-over collar and showed a well modeled throat.

A large and powerfully-made head was covered with thick hair which, like the moustache was carefully dyed. The forehead was crossed by several deep wrinkles, a large aquiline nose with wide expanded nostrils, and an olive complexion, with eyes which had not lost their brilliancy, completed the physique of the stranger. His eyelids were heavy, shorn of lashes, and veined with thready lines of red, showing that the man had used, and abused life. His mouth, drooping at the corners,

indicated this also, its expression was cynical and worn, but when these eyes and this mouth were animated in conversation, one was tempted to believe, that the man was twenty years younger than he had looked when his face was in repose.

Gaspard de Genevraie was in reality one of the last of that eccentric generation, who from 1835 to 1840, flourished as the champions of romance.

After having attempted a literary career, he threw himself into politics, in the same way that an unappreciated painter plunges into photography. In 1848 he was the president of a club, and a conspicuous public speaker; all at once he vanished like a meteor from the sky. After a time he was heard of in Mexico, and again in California. He had tried everything, socialism — religion — work — he had even been consul in some town in the Malayan Archipelago. Now, as the lawyer Bouillard stated, he had returned from Java, and had come into port like a solid ship, which has weathered many a tough gale, but which still keeps a bold face, in spite of its broken masts and tattered sails.

Standing leaning against the railing of the orchestra with one leg lightly crossed over the other, and one thumb in his vest, he looked about the room and occasionally exchanged a word with the lawyer at his side.

“Do you see,” said the lawyer, “that lady in red, seated by the side of a young girl in white.

"Yes," answered La Genevraie, in a full deep voice. "I see them both—the little girl is very pretty, with her dreamy angelic air, but the mother looks like an old woman who keeps an apple stand at the corner of the street."

"Hush!" said the lawyer, "the mother represents one of the principal branches of that Morel family, of which we were speaking."

"The deuce she does! Then my dear sir, pray take me to her, and introduce me."

The lawyer, followed by his companion, went at once to Madame Sénéchal, who opened her eyes wide, as he said something to her in a low voice.

"Have I ever heard of a relative who went to India, do you ask," cried the good lady aloud. "To be sure I have; it was an uncle of my grandfather's, a certain Jacques Morel, who had left Bay before the revolution, and of whom we have never heard since."

"Well then, I can tell you of him—or rather Monsieur Genevraie will—He will tell you that your relative died in that foreign land, and left no children to inherit his large fortune."

"A colossal fortune, Madame," interrupted La Genevraie, bowing. "Jacques Morel died in 1825, at Batavia, where I have recently been. He was never married, and died intestate, so that his magnificent property is held by the Holland government in default of known heirs."

"But I represent one of these heirs!" cried Madame Sénéchal, who thought herself dreaming.

"In that case, Madame," replied La Genevraie, with his theatrical manner, "permit me to congratulate you heartily. I have it my power to give you all the information you require, in order to claim your heritage."

"Holy Virgin!" said Madame Sénéchal, "and how much is this fortune?"

"At least twenty-four million francs."

The lady turned pale, and seemed about to faint.

"Yes, Madame," repeated La Genevraie in audible tones, looking about him. "Twenty-four millions francs without estimating the interest."

CHAPTER III.

ALADDIN'S LAMP.

THE following Sunday, the inhabitants of La Rue des Juifs, where resided the lawyer Bouillard, witnessed a spectacle as unusual as it was singular. From early morning the house had been fairly besieged by clients, so that the old servant, tired out with going to the door, finally left it half open and called from the kitchen when she heard a knock:

"Come in! come in!"

The waiting room was filled with the noisy visitors, who sat in rows along the walls. There were silk weavers from the faubourgs, grape growers bent double by their toil in their vineyards, women in their Sunday gowns, and peasants in blue blouses. Shop keepers, farmers and working men were all there, looking at each other distrustfully.

Throw out a few crumbs to a sparrow, who is hopping about on your balcony. In less than one second, warned by some strange instinct, all the sparrows in the neighborhood will flock there and quarrel and fight until the last crumb is gone. Thus it was with the Morel inheritance. The news told by La Genevraie, had spread in a twinkling all over the town. The memory of Jacques Morel, hitherto dormant in the

minds of some of the old men, now sprung to life with extraordinary distinctness. This lost child, to whom no one had given a second thought, and who had left his native land, shaking the dust off his feet, was now a sort of hero.

Every human being in Bay and in its vicinity—and their number was great—who bore the name of Morel, hurried to the lawyer, eager for some portion of the twenty-four millions. Tales of unexpected inheritances and fabulous treasures, always appeal to the masses, who, restless under the burthen of daily toil, dream of fortunes falling from the sky like miraculous manna.

This was the same at Bay. All the Morels listened with watering mouths to the communications made by La Genevraie. Among the most eager as well as the most credulous, was Madame Sénéchal. She was the first person to call on the lawyer, and with her was Angèle.

“Who will venture, in future, to disbelieve in cards?” she said to some one she met there. “For the last fortnight they have persistently predicted this event. You remember, Angèle? A stranger from a great distance, with money, you know!”

Not only did the good woman believe in this glowing tale of the fortune that lay idle, waiting for the heirs, but she had offered the best room in her house to La Genevraie; for, with him under her roof, she seemed much nearer the inheritance; so she waited on the Parisian by inches, who in return raised for her a

corner of the vail which yet shrouded the mysterious splendors of the Morel succession.

La Genevraie himself as fully believed in these millions as he believed in anything, and in reality, the story was not entirely a fiction. A certain Morel, originally from Lorraine, had accumulated a fortune when in Batavia, and while Gaspard was in Java, he had heard the subject frequently discussed. He had heard the tale as he would one from the Arabian Nights; but after his return to Paris, the subject took a strong hold on his imagination, and he spoke of it at a dinner one day, at which the lawyer Bouillard was present. Under the influence of wine and a good dinner, the large fortune of the unknown man quadrupled, and it was moreover decided that he could have been none other than the Morel from Bay. The notion gratified the chimerical brain of the lawyer and the adventurous spirit of La Genevraie.

Without troubling himself as to how the identity of the two Morels could be established clearly enough to induce the Holland government to relinquish their prize, the lawyer and La Genevraie at once put the story in circulation.

In the office there was a low buzz followed by a profound silence, when the door opened and the lawyer and his companion entered. After being formally presented to the assembly, La Genevraie took the floor. Standing half-leaning against a high desk, with his light coat well buttoned over his swelling chest, the

orator of the day began an enthusiastic account of the Morel fortune. His magnificent air and his strong language made a profound impression on his hearers, while he, excited by the effect he produced, described the riches of the nabob. He painted marble palaces, approached through avenues of magnificent trees, bananas and palms; the snowy fields of coffee blossoms, with their delicious odor; the sandalwood boxes, opening to disclose rich stuffs and jewels; the crowd of bronze servants in rose-colored drapery; the silver trays, heaped with tropical fruits. His audience listened with breathless interest, open-mouthed and eager. Madame Sénéchal lost not one syllable; she sat with her hands nervously pressed together. In short, the orator met with such a brilliant success, that when he had finished, all the future heirs burst into frantic applause, and immediately agreed to raise three thousand francs, to pay the preliminary expenses of the investigations. They also agreed to give La Genevraie a power of attorney to represent the heirs.

When Angèle and her mother reached home and were entering the door, they caught sight of an omnibus driving to the station with Joseph Toussaint and René des Armoises. René saw the two ladies and waved his hand, while Angèle, with cheeks suddenly flushed, watched the omnibus until it turned the corner.

Madame des Armoises was not with her son. René, who detested scenes, had entreated her to remain at home, while she entrusted to Joseph, the duty of seeing

her son safely off. Conscientiously and faithfully, did Joseph fulfil this duty, bearing the traveller's coat and valise, and finally at the station, he got the ticket and registered the luggage, while René with his cigar in his mouth, idly switched his cane as he walked up and down the platform.

"Thanks, my good friend," he said to Toussaint when the latter handed him his ticket. "You are one in a thousand, and I shall think of you with infinite regret. May I depend on you to see my mother occasionally, and will you talk to her of me?"

He lighted another cigar, and as he threw away the match, he said, carelessly :

"This is a most glorious day. One longs for wings in such weather, and with such a sky."

Joseph was deeply troubled. He clearly saw that René was leaving without one single regret, and that he would toss aside all his past life, with as much indifference as he did his burned match.

"This spring sunshine and soft air," continued des Armoises, "imparts to me new vigor. I shall work like a tiger, in Paris. I do not yet know what I shall do, but it will be something that will make me famous. I am only afraid of dying before I have made myself a name. There comes the train!"

The platform was soon covered with luggage and travellers who had got out for a moment to stretch their limbs, while boys ran briskly from car to car crying the products of the country.

"Good-by, Joseph," cried René, as he sprang lightly into a compartment. As soon as my first volume is printed I will send it to you."

"Do not forget us," said Joseph, considerably moved.

"Indeed I will not, and I shall hope to see you in Paris ere long. Good-by, my boy!"

The doors were closed and the locomotive rushed away, leaving silence and loneliness behind. During this time Angèle was alone in her room with the door locked. René's departure had driven from her mind all the anticipations inspired by the Morel fortune. She opened her window and looked toward the station. The day was indeed glorious. Against the walls of the church a large yellow butterfly was gayly fluttering. A sharp whistle, and Angèle's heart swelled as she saw the smoke from the locomotive. The butterfly was gone—the spring air became suddenly sharp and wintry. René was gone, when would she see him again? Should she ever go to Paris, to that distant Paris which she longed to behold!

And the girl's melancholy eyes were riveted on that distant horizon toward which her poet was flying, like the blue bird in a fairy tale. She too longed for wings like René, and fretted at her imprisonment. From the church came rich music, fragments of chants and the roll of the organ mingling with her reverie. She thought of the hours René had spent with her mother and herself—of the waltz with her at the ball—of his verses, which he had taught her to repeat—and almost

mechanically she recited them aloud; they were all that were left now that the poet had fled.

She left the window and stood near the chimney, while the lines dropped from her lips. The rhythm calmed her, and her grief was soothed by their music. Insensibly she raised her voice, and she fancied that never had she recited René's verses so well.

"Bravo!" cried a voice outside.

The girl ran to the door and threw it open, and beheld, to her great surprise, Gaspard La Genevraie.

"Go on, Mademoiselle," he said, "go on! your voice is deliciously full and ripe, and your accent precisely what it should be. You have a positive talent."

La Genevraie was sincere, and Angèle, after her first confusion, recognized this, while her vanity was much gratified by the approbation of the Parisian, who had seen all the famous actresses of Europe, and was a habitué of the best theatres. He begged her to go on, and took a seat, where, with his legs crossed and head thrown back, he listened with the air of a connoisseur.

"Superb! wonderful!" he would exclaim at intervals.

"My dear child!" he exclaimed, when Angèle ceased, "with a face and figure like yours, you do not propose, I trust, to remain in this hole. It is Paris and the stage you require. You would carry the audience by storm. Your gestures are easy, the expression and contour of your face simply magnificent, while your

way of rendering those simple verses is extremely piquante. Modesty is not without its charm after all," he added, cynically. "You must exchange this place for the luxurious dressing-room of a theatre, just as soon as possible, and I promise you that the public shall adore the very ground you tread!"

"For Heaven's sake, never utter such words in my father's hearing," said Angèle, "he has an utter horror of the theatre."

"I am not in the least astonished to hear that," returned La Genevraie, with some impertinence. "The good man is a little old-fashioned, I shall speak to your mother—she is different. Good Heavens! must a star be treated like a common candle, and snuffed like a tallow dip! When this Morel matter is well under way, we will talk of this again."

La Genevraie went to find Bouillard, the lawyer, and to him spoke with enthusiasm of Angèle's talent. "The idea," he said, "of finding a treasure like that, in such a commonplace household!"

The Morel affair created naturally an immense excitement. The town was divided for and against, and discussed each step with considerable acrimony. Boblique was at the head of the unbelievers from the first. Sénéchal naturally sided with his master, but he was not sufficiently master of his own household to oppose certain of the heirs meeting at his house. These conferences too, generally ended in a dinner, and we have already discovered the good man's weakness in that

direction. The prospect of an appetizing roast or some toothsome sweet dish was quite sufficient to undermine his powers of resistance.

Toussaint took an intense dislike to the Parisian, whose theatrical fashions of speech, cynical wit and stormy eloquence, awakened all his distrust. He did not in the least credit the Morel fortune, and stigmatized it as an invention of the Evil One, intended to ruin all his hopes of happiness.

Finally, every necessary power was given to La Genevraie. Clothed with these, and having the amount raised by the heirs in his pocket, he announced that he was ready to start. Moved by gratitude for so much kindness, the Morel heirs united to offer a dinner to their commissioner.

This dinner for fifty, was given at the Hotel de Metz. La Genevraie occupied the head of the table, while Angèle and her mother sat on the either side. It was really a curious scene, all these people—mostly market gardeners and mechanics—seated at this long table, glittering with silver and glass. The waiters had infinite difficulty not to laugh.

The health of the celebrated traveller, La Genevraie, was drank, and he was solemnly thanked for his zeal in behalf of the Morel heirs. The traveller listened gravely, leaning back in his chair and carelessly brushing away the crumbs on his cravat; and when the attorney, to whom had been entrusted this duty had finished, La Genevraie arose, and, in his rich voice and

dramatic form of expression, thanked the assembled company, and gave a brief sketch of what steps he proposed to take. This speech was a success. A glass to the memory of Jacques Morel was drank, and then songs were proposed.

La Genevraie shuddered at the very idea, and hastily interposed :

"I have something better than that to suggest," he said.

"We have here, gentlemen, a great artist," he continued, "who will eclipse Rachel, if she will take the trouble to try. Ask Mademoiselle Sénéchal to recite to you, and, if you can persuade her, you will thank me, with tears in your eyes."

Angèle's color rose, and then faded until she was pale as her dress, but, excited by the scene, the lights and the champagne, she yielded to the entreaties, and, rising from her chair, began to recite one of René's poems, which was at once lyric and descriptive.

The poet had endeavored to describe the vague intoxication produced by the delicate odor of the blossoms of the grape vines in the month of June—the breath of spring and the richness of autumn—the songs of the vintage and the dance of the peasants.

The verses were received with applause. Not only were these rough, illiterate people thrilled by the musical rhythm and by the beauty of Angèle, but they were touched by the tribute paid to the wine, and the grapes of their district. Monsieur Sénéchal was utterly over-

whelmed by his daughter's success, while his wife wept copious tears.

La Genevraie himself uttered thunders of applause. "Wonderful!" he cried. "Madame," he said, turning to Angèle's mother, "your daughter has enormous talent, and talent in our day is a fortune. The doors of the Théâtre Français will open wide for her, whenever she issues her commands, and she will make heaps of money."

"She will not need to do that," answered Madame Sénéchal, half offended, "for she shall have the millions from Batavia!"

"That is true, but, in the meantime, she possesses treasures which are not to be disdained. Your daughter has a glorious vocation."

Madame Sénéchal swallowed all this with avidity, while Angèle's heart beat quicker and was filled with vague, indefinable hope, like a soft April breeze, wherein one can distinguish no distinct perfume, but which whispers of spring and flowers.

The conversation around the table among these poor devils, who had never seen a thousand francs at any one time, was now of millions. They sipped their wine as if it had been liquid gold, and before their troubled eyes passed all sorts of gorgeous visions. La Genevraie looked on with a sarcastic smile.

The day after a fête is rarely gay. Monsieur Sénéchal rose with a bitter taste in his mouth, and a heavy head. He thought, too, with considerable discomfort,

that he had a favor to ask of his master. A couple of months' salary in advance was now a vital necessity to him. He had finally agreed to pay his proportion of the amount raised by the Morel heirs to push their claim, this and the suppers and toilettes for Angèle, had walked away with all his savings. If the old lawyer would not advance him something now, Sénéchal was in a very bad box.

It was, therefore, with a sinking heart that the clerk entered his master's private office and preferred his request. The lawyer listened without a word. He regarded Sénéchal as having gone over to the enemy, and determined to punish him for disregarding his advice and opinion.

"You want four hundred francs! You have some good investment in view then, I presume ——"

"No," replied the other, somewhat embarrassed, "I have a payment to make; that is all."

The lawyer knew the truth in a moment. "You are not in debt, I trust?"

"Not exactly, but my wife is one of the Morel heirs, and this money ——"

"Ah! I understand," replied his master, in a chilling tone. "I am sorry not to oblige you, but I really have no money to throw away ——"

"Do you think I will not return it?"

"How can I tell? What confidence can I place in a man who is simple enough, to be carried away by such folly? I am even forced to doubt the propriety of

entrusting to you the management of my personal affairs —— ”

Sénéchal turned very red. He was deeply wounded and mortified.

“ I am sorry, sir,” he said, in a trembling voice, “ that you have any reason to doubt my honesty. Do you take me for a rascal ? ”

“ No, sir; I take you for a fool ! ” thundered the exasperated lawyer; “ and I say, moreover, that my affairs are in as great danger in the hands of a fool, as of a rascal. ”

Sénéchal's blue eyes flashed, as they never had flashed before. He went to his desk, emptied it of all the papers and account-book. With these and the key of the safe, he returned to his master's private office.

“ Have the goodness, sir, to look over these accounts, ” said Sénéchal. “ You have known me for thirty years. If my faithful service for all that time, is no guarantee of my honesty, we had best part, and you can find some one in my place. ”

The lawyer settled his spectacles. “ You are very proud, it seems to me, ” he said, grimly, as he drew the papers toward him, “ but I suppose that may be expected in a millionaire. I will look over your accounts when I have time. ”

Sénéchal drew from his pocket a bunch of keys and laid them silently on the desk. Then he took his hat and went to the door.

“ Good-by, sir, ” he said.

"Good-by, sir," repeated the lawyer, coldly. "I trust that Jacques Morel's millions will be as tangible as you believe. Remember, however, that a man does not return to my service as easily as he leaves it."

Sénéchal went home with an aching heart.

"What is the matter?" cried Angèle, seeing him so pale. "Why are you home so early from the office?"

"I shall never go to the office again," said Monsieur Sénéchal, sinking into a chair. "I am good for nothing any more!"

CHAPTER IV

A NEW ADVISER.

“**W**HAT is the use of being so miserable!” cried Madame Sénéchal, when she heard the news, “you only leave the old miser a little sooner, that is all! Keep up your heart—have a little patience—and we will make this man ashamed of himself. Besides, our vineyard promises well this year, the frost has not touched the vines, and we shall have quantities of grapes in October. This is a trifling misfortune after all!”

But Monsieur Sénéchal would not allow himself to be consoled. This dismissal, or rather enforced resignation of his position in the lawyer's office, was a severe blow to him, and he fell ill. When he grew better he wandered about the house, following his wife into the kitchen. He did not know what to do with himself, for his life had been hitherto so fully occupied, that idleness was unknown to him. After dinner he fell into a sleep, so heavy that it worried Angèle, who had more sympathy for her father's sufferings than had her mother. She adored her father, and tried in a thousand ways to cheer him. She begged him to walk with her on the green hills which overlooked the town.

“Come, papa,” she cried, “this spring air and sunshine will lighten your heart!”

Alas! the swelling buds only reminded Monsieur Sénéchal that he might be compelled to sell his vineyard, to raise the four hundred francs promised to La Genevraie.

"No, no," he answered, "I do not wish to go out. My heart is heavy, dear, at having injured your future prospects."

But his daughter dragged him off with her. Returning from one of these walks one day, she went up to Toussaint's room on tiptoe.

"Will you do me a favor?" she said, hastily.

"With all my heart," answered the youth, with a radiant face.

"Papa fancies he may have to sell his vineyard, to raise the money necessary to push our claim, and this idea is killing him. I have just thought of my little bank. I am sure there is more than four hundred francs in it, and I cannot keep this money while my poor papa is so unhappy."

"How good you are, Angèle!"

"Only he must never know that the money comes from me; and I was thinking that if you would only offer it to him in your name! He likes you, and would have no objection to being under obligations to you."

"But," said Joseph, "are you willing to give up the prospect of Paris?"

The girl sighed, and it was easy to see that her sacrifice was great.

"No theatres, you know," continued Toussaint,

provokingly — no prospect of any such enjoyments — when you have opened your bank !”

“Why do you dwell on that?” interrupted Angèle, impatiently; “will you, or will you not, do me this favor?”

Tears were in her eyes, and Joseph longed to snatch her hand. .

“Yes,” he said at last; “I will do this for you, only on condition that you shall keep your bank. It would be a great pity to open it before the date you fixed for yourself.”

“I do not understand,” murmured the girl.

“Then let me explain. I am not literally without resources. I have a small income of twelve hundred francs, and I have just received a quarter. I have no use for it now. Let me offer it to your father in that way. I shall not be compelled to utter a falsehood, and we shall be much more comfortable.”

“No !” she exclaimed, in great confusion; “I cannot accept such a favor !”

“Pshaw !” he answered; “it is no such great favor. Money is nothing to me. I only care for the pleasure it brings me.”

Angèle shook her head. He took her two hands gently in his: “You will make me very happy,” he said, softly.

His voice and his eyes were at once so persuasive and so honest, that Angèle was deeply moved, and accepted. She smiled up into the young man's face, and they

stood looking into each other's eyes. Toussaint's lips parted to utter the words that burned upon them, but he colored deeply, restrained himself, and dropped the girl's hands. She went away after thanking him once more.

Before Læ Genevraie left Bay, he took Angèle and her mother aside—

"Madame," he said, earnestly, "you have no right to keep your daughter here, where both complexion and voice will be faded before she has learned the value of either. The stage is her vocation; and I repeat, that her fortune is in her own hand. Your daughter is destined to be a Queen on the stage. Her brow is worthy of a crown. Take her to Paris; I know many a manager who will gladly engage her. Think of what I say, and remember that I am always ready to serve you."

When Joseph Toussaint saw the omnibus in which La Genevraie was seated, turn the corner on its way to the station, he uttered a sigh of relief. Monsieur Sénéchal's anxieties, and the small service which the young man had been enabled to render him, combined to attach the young man more strongly than before to the simple household, and he devoted his evenings to them, listening to the old clerk's reminiscences, and reading aloud. He enjoyed this as long as Angèle was present, but if she left the room he sighed, and grew very absent-minded.

Monsieur Sénéchal finally discovered this, and watched the young man curiously.

"Ah! ha!" he thought, "Joseph is certainly in love with Angèle. If this is really so, I shall be a happy man once more. But bless my soul, how timid he is! He will never dare to speak out, and I shall be obliged to extract his secret from him some evening."

Angèle's thoughts at the time were leagues away from poor Joseph; and, happy in her father's relief from present anxiety, she began to build new castles in Spain. Even if the Morel property ended in smoke, she had still her own talents, by which she could restore prosperity to her home. The idea of being the providence and the glory of her family flattered her pride and her vanity. On the long evenings in May, weary of pricking her fingers with her needle, she leaned from her window to drink in the fresh air. She thought of nothing but the theatre. Under the oblique rays of the setting sun the waters of the canal shimmered with a purple light. Beyond the town, lay the vineyards, bathed in gold: fleecy clouds floated over the sky, and toward the West took a rosy hue.

"Actresses are Queens nowadays," La Genevraie had said, and the bells, as they rang out, seemed to repeat the phrase; while the swallows, in their rapid flight, apparently took their way toward Paris.

Paris! Paris! Fame and Fortune were there—and perhaps Love, too! Did not René des Armoises live in Paris? If she became a great actress, would he not write a play for her? Her glory would diminish the present distance between them, and with what joy,

would she lay her crowns at the feet of the only man who had ever made her heart beat quicker. These ideas haunted her awake and asleep, and affected her nerves in such a way, that she began to walk in her sleep as she had done in her childhood.

Weeks were passing rapidly away, and the Morel heirs began to grow impatient, when one day came a letter from La Genevraie, accompanied by a box containing a magnificent bouquet for Angèle.

In the letter La Genevraie stated that he had begun his work, with a fair prospect of success; "but," he said, "it will hang on for a long time. The Holland government are not inclined to listen to reason; in fact I may say, you must all cultivate patience, for the affair may be one of years."

In a postscript he added:

"Tell Mademoiselle Angèle that my box of flowers is sent as a sample of the bouquets which will be thrown at her feet on the evening of her *début* at the theatre."

"What does he mean by all that gabble about bouquets and theatres?" grumbled Monsieur Sénéchal. "Does he wish to make a Merry Andrew of my daughter? Throw his letter and foolish flowers into the fire!"

Angèle escaped from the room with her bouquet, and presently her mother followed her.

"Cultivate patience, indeed!" she cried. "Monsieur La Genevraie finds it easy enough to talk, but we have

no time to wait. Your father has lost his situation, we are living on our capital, and soon we shall have nothing left but our eyes to weep with!"

"Ah!" said Angèle, as she plunged her bouquet into a large vase of fresh water, "if my father were not so prejudiced against the theatre!"

"What do you mean?" cried Madame Sénéchal. Have you the same idea that I have? You might make enormous sums of money; and then, too, almost all actresses end by a brilliant marriage—and you are lovely enough for a prince!"

The good lady had no sooner gotten rid of one chimaera than she was ready to mount another, and go off at full gallop. Her vivid imagination depicted Angèle on the stage—the audience wildly applauding—a Russian prince offering her his hand.

Her daughter stopped her at this precise point by saying—

"I can do nothing unless I go to Paris, and to that my father would never consent."

"Your father never could make up his mind to anything, my dear; you must go without saying one word to him!"

"Deceive him!" cried Angèle, aghast. "Oh, no! I cannot do that, it would be very wrong." But to the good lady, nothing was wrong that gratified her daughter.

"Wrong!" she cried. "How would it be wrong? Have you, or have you not, talent of a superior order?"

If you have, it is we who are doing wrong not to draw some benefit from it. I doubt if your father would complain if he should find a delicious supper laid, every night when you came from the theatre. If you go on the stage, it is for his benefit as well as for your own. I will take all the blame on myself. You can go in a week, and stay with a friend of mine, whose husband keeps a little boarding-house on La Rue Jacob. They are honest people, and will take good care of you, until Monsieur La Genevraie introduces you to some manager."

"But," said Angèle, "this will take a great deal of money."

"To be sure! but there must be a good deal in your little safe."

Angèle made no further objection, the temptation was too strong. If she were successful, her family would be comfortable once more, and this thought removed her last scruples. It was decided that she should make all her preparations in secret. She would take with her only a valise, and her mother would send a trunk after her.

When she was alone in her room, Angèle locked the door and opened her wardrobe, where, under a pile of linen, lay her savings bank. It was one of those earthen barrels, such as are given to children, with a slit toward the top on one side. Angèle held it in her hand for a moment, and then with one sharp blow, broke it, and its contents all fell upon the floor. A ray of

sunshine glanced through the window, and fell on the scattered gold and silver pieces, whose various effigies were so many episodes in the girl's last nine years. That great copper sou covered with verdigris, was the first sacrifice she made—it was a cake laid on the shrine—a cake relinquished as the first step toward seeing Paris.

That pale gold Louis, had been given to her on the day of her first communion, and she had held it long hours between her fingers, before she could make up her mind to drop it into that gap. And that other, dated from a certain autumnal evening, when her father, having sold as it stood, all his vintage to the wine merchant, tossed it to Angèle and bade her buy pins with it. How lovely it was that night, and what a merry dance they had! Each piece held a memory, each impression recalled some scene of her childhood or youth, and all seemed to cry out to the girl:

“Keep us! Keep us! Don't scatter us about the world—we belong to the calm, pure days of your youth!”

But the bouquet on the table, with its dainty odors, the spring breeze that came in through the open window, all murmured, “Paris! Paris!”

Angèle piled up her money and counted it slowly. There were nearly eight hundred francs, which seemed to her an inexhaustible treasure.

From this time, she thought of little, save of leaving home. She was agitated and nervous. She had

sudden little gushes of affection for her father, and one night, after she had kissed him warmly, Joseph saw that her eyes were full of tears.

"Your daughter does not seem quite like herself," the young man said to the old clerk, when Angèle had left the room.

"Do you think so?" answered Sénéchal, with a laugh. The old gentleman had determined that Tous-saint should open his heart that night. "It seems to me that you are none too gay, either. Confide in me, my boy; I am a safe adviser."

"I have nothing to confide," said the young man, with a blush. "My only trouble is, that I am weary of having no especial aim in life—"

"Nonsense!" interrupted old Sénéchal. "You must marry."

"Marry! No, no, my dear sir. I am not the man to take a woman, as one plucks an apple from a tree in passing under it. I would like to choose a little; and who can assure me that such a woman, as I would marry, would accept a fellow like myself, who has so little to offer."

"I dare say, she would be a difficult person to suit. But have you selected this woman—is she somewhere now in existence?"

"Yes, she is in existence—certainly!" cried Joseph, after a brief struggle with himself; "but I shall never presume to ask her if she will have me."

"She must be a princess. But you are foolish, man! Take heart of grace, and see what she says—"

"No; for were she to laugh at me, I should be mortally wounded."

"Laugh at you!" exclaimed Sénéchal, quite offended, "do you think that Angèle—"

"Do you know, then?" exclaimed Joseph, crimsoning to the roots of his hair. "Ah! Monsieur Sénéchal, I swear to you, that I have not uttered one word to her—"

"I know that very well, my boy, and that is all the fault I have to find with you. Young girls, you know, like fellows with some audacity, and if I were you, I would speak."

"Then you authorize me to do so?" stammered Joseph.

"I believe that you are a brave fellow, and that my daughter is no fool! Try your luck as soon as you please. To-morrow, my wife will be at her sisters-in-law, and we alone. I will go out and leave you with Angèle, and you can speak to her frankly."

"To-morrow night!" cried Joseph, a cold chill running over him. "Do you not think it would be wiser to wait a while? Just think, if she were to say no!"

"She will say yes, coward! A man like myself is not easily deceived, and I have watched her for a week. Good-night, my boy, and remember what you are to do to-morrow!"

The next evening, when he left the office, Joseph walked up and down the path, under the trees, for a couple of hours, before he could make up his mind

what he should say to Angèle ; but the words buzzed through his head like water rushing over a mill-dam, and each phrase he arranged, seemed to him perfectly idiotic. Becoming desperate at last, he determined to trust to the inspiration of the moment. He had no time to lose, for the clock was striking, and he knew that supper would be on the table.

"How pale you are," said Sénéchal, meeting him in the corridor. "Keep up a good heart, comrade. Angèle has not yet come in ; but it is eight o'clock, and she will be here presently. She went out an hour ago, after kissing and hugging me until I was nearly suffocated. She behaved a little queerly, and I am convinced that it is on your account. But what can keep her so long?"

He moved about the room restlessly, while Joseph sat by the stove. From his chair he could see through the window, whose curtains had not been dropped, a patch of sky, where the stars were slowly appearing, one by one, as the night grew darker. The voices of children at play, came to him from a distance, and also the rumble of a departing train.

"The wind is west," said Monsieur Sénéchal, as he lighted the lamp, "for we hear the whistle of the locomotive. I wonder if Angèle means to starve us."

"I am not hungry," answered Joseph, who found a certain pleasure in this agony of waiting.

"But I am!" muttered the old clerk. "Perfectly famished, indeed. Here she comes!"

The door opened, and Madame Sénéchal entered, very much agitated and considerably out of breath.

"Where is Angèle!" cried her father.

"She will not be here to-night. She, in fact, will be away for several days," answered the lady, in a voice that was far from steady.

"What on earth do you mean?" exclaimed Sénéchal.

"I mean — But here is a letter which will explain."

Joseph held his breath, while Sénéchal snatched from his wife's hands the letter she extended, and read the following:

"Dear little father, forgive me! I am going to Paris. I am too big, to be a burthen on you any longer, and I mean to go on the stage. It will be a good thing for us all; and I am told that I shall be a success. When I have made money, I shall come back to you, and we three will live happily together. And in the meantime, I implore you not to think hardly of your little girl, who loves you dearly, in spite of her wilfulness and disobedience."

"Ah! child! child!" said her father, in a hoarse, unnatural voice. He swayed to and fro, clutched the air, and fell an inert mass on the floor.

"Heavenly Father!" cried Madame Sénéchal, rushing toward her husband. "It is apoplexy! Run, Joseph, run for the doctor, please!"

CHAPTER V.

A PARISIAN PHILOSOPHER.

“**P**ARIS! Paris!” The conductors threw open the doors of the train; the sharp whistles of the locomotive echoed through the vaulted station; the travellers rushed to the entrances, and Angèle Sénéchal was nearly carried off her feet and into the waiting-room. She had not closed her eyes all night, and now seated herself in the most remote corner of that dreary room, lighted by the cold, grey dawn. Her companions in the train, were busily getting their thousand and one packages together—the women, wrapped in shapeless waterproofs, looking haggard and cold from want of sleep and fatigue. Children were crying, and the scene was forlorn enough, but the girl felt its full sharpness, only when she saw a father hurrying into the station, and embrace his young children, whom he had come to meet.

Angèle had no one to greet her. She was utterly alone in this great town; but that hope, which, in youth, walks always a little before us, like our shadows in the morning sunlight, now quickly came to comfort her and gave a new direction to her thoughts. Had she not at last reached the Paris of her dreams? Did she not hear the roar of the streets and the turmoil of its seething life?

When she left the station it was six o'clock, and the streets were animated with life. Looking out of the carriage window, Angèle examined curiously the long rows of high buildings, shining in the morning sun. The young foliage of the trees on the Boulevards were tossing in the breeze. Wagons, laden with vegetables, stood around the markets, and filled the air with their fresh country smell. At the newspaper stalls, the proprietors were busily folding up the damp journals, and the sidewalks were filled with workwomen and shop girls, who were hurrying to their duties with that alert, graceful step which is a distinguishing characteristic of the Parisian grisette. When her carriage rolled over the bridges, Angèle uttered an involuntary exclamation of delight at the sight of the Seine, and its succession of bridges, the old trees hanging over the water, the boats moored to the arches, and massive buildings, distant spires and towers.

The young girl had not recovered from her first ecstasy of delight, when the carriage drew up before the furnished lodgings which were kept by her mother's friends. Angèle sent in her name and a letter from her mother. She expected the cordial, but inquisitive, reception of country people, but she was quickly undeceived, for the mistress of the house simply spoke to her politely, confided her to the care of a servant, and returned to her own affairs. A room was given to her nearly at the top of the house—a dreary room whose windows opened on a court-yard as deep, dark and narrow as a well.

She had determined to call on La Genevraie without delay, but nature was stronger than her will, for she fell asleep at once and slept soundly until four o'clock. It was too late, of course, for her to pay the visit that day, so she occupied herself in unpacking her trunk. When that was done, she ordered up a simple dinner, which she ate with rather a heavy heart. As the twilight came on, the Angelus rang from the tower of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, and the sound carried the girl's thoughts back to her home in the la Rue des Savonnaires. She saw her father's melancholy face, and Joseph's astonished eyes, and her own filled with tears; but a certain liveliness, which was one of her characteristics, and the fact that her impressions were never very deep, or very lasting, softened her remorse.

"Mamma is very clever," she said, half aloud, "and she will make things smooth. Then, too, they will take a different view of my absence when they hear of my success." And she began once more to think of the money she should send home—of what she must do the next day—of the Paris where René des Armoises lived and worked, perhaps within a stone throw of where she now was—and by degrees her courage and buoyancy came back. She undressed, said her prayers, locked her door, and slept soundly until morning, when she was awakened by the noises in the street, above all of which, came the piercing cry of the umbrella vendor, who flourishes and is most gay when the weather is bad. And in fact the day was gray enough—a fine, persistent rain was falling.

Angèle dressed slowly, ate a piece of chocolate with a roll that was left from her dinner the day before, and going down stairs, asked to be directed to the street where La Genevraie resided. He lived not far from La Rue Jacob—Cour de Rohan—in one of the most picturesque corners of old Paris, where one might suppose one's self to be in some old provincial town. All is profoundly still in these places, the roar of carriages is heard afar off, but one is rarely seen in these winding streets, where the houses are mostly used as libraries or bookbinding establishments, an industry that is a very noiseless one.

The irregular roofs stand out against the blue sky with something of the look of those old people who astonish the present generation with the dress and manners of the previous century. The lower windows are defended by heavy iron bars, but higher up, scarlet geraniums blaze in all their luxuriance of bloom, while clothes are hung to dry on the roofs. The country quiet seems to have developed and encouraged country habits. The bookbinder on the lower floor has improvised a screen for his windows by planting vines between the bricks of the public way. The bric-à-brac man opposite, displays his odd collection of Parisian knick-knacks on the grass-grown pavement. Facing La Rue de Sardenet was a large double gate of rusty iron. Within the courtyard she saw an old well on one side, and on the other, a lilac tree, stunted and scantily clothed with leaves. It was here that La Genevraie resided. Angèle could not

at first credit this. She had pictured this Parisian to herself—with his lordly airs and his excessive refinement—as living in some superb hôtel in the most stately portion of the city. She ascended the dark stairs and stopped before a door. There was no bell, but on a nail hung a slate, with the following most prudent direction.

“Knock three times, and then call your name three times.”

The girl was more and more amazed. What was the meaning of this excessive caution? She did precisely this, however, and in a few moments the key turned, the door opened, and La Genevraie, wrapped in an ample dressing gown, stood before her.

“You have come then, my beauty!” he exclaimed, in his cheery fashion. “Come in!”

He conducted Angèle through an ante-room piled with books, and took her into a disordered sleeping room. Handsome pieces of furniture, rare china, and fantastic arms, were cheek by jowl with the commonest things. A desk was piled high with volumes, papers and proofs from the publishers. La Genevraie's heavy eyes looked as if he had just risen.

“Have you just come to Paris?” he said, as he handed her a chair; “and how are all the good people at home?”

For a few moments the conversation was limited to these common-places. Angèle expected him to ask her what she intended to do, but La Genevraie was silent.

To tell the truth, he had totally forgotten the advice he had given her. On leaving Bay, he had conscientiously expended the three thousand francs raised by the Morel heirs, in pushing their claims. But, when this money was gone, and he had made no advances in setting aside the obstacles which stood in his way, Gaspard, not being a man to fight long against the same wind-mill, dismissed the whole subject from his mind. Some of his friends had started a daily paper, and into this enterprise he now threw himself, heart and soul. Bay — the Morel claim — the Sénéchal family — were now mere shadows, or rather, half effaced drawings.

A dead silence ensued, and the poor little girl heard the sad sound of the rain dash against the windows.

"Do you mean to stay here long?" asked La Genevraie.

"Why, of course I do," she answered, astonished at the question. "I came to study for the stage, as you advised. I rely on your support, and am ready to appear at any theatre you choose to designate."

"The deuce you are!" he muttered, in some confusion. "But, my dear child, you are going too fast; it is not so easy as you suppose to enter a theatrical company. In the first place, are you perfectly sure that you have the requisite talent?"

"But it was you," she exclaimed, in great trouble, "it was you who encouraged me, and told me I was a real artist."

"Of course I did, and I only did justice to your natural gifts. You have a very pretty talent for the provinces, but Paris, you know, my child, is a different matter. Clever people are as thick here as clouds of flies! You have a good voice and a good figure, and these are all precious things and worth gold, if you know how to use them. But merely to tread the boards, hold your arms and your head, and throw out your voice, are quite other things, and need practice. Many persons have spent their youth in trying to acquire just this, and have utterly failed. In a word, nature is not enough, and art must come forward with her alphabet and grammar!" He looked at the girl as he spoke, and saw that her eyes were full of tears. These tears, and the pretty lips set firmly together to keep back her sobs, made an impression on this tough Bohemian, and touched the heart which he believed to have grown as tough as a rhinoceros' hide. He looked back at his far away youth, recalled the bitterness of his first disappointment, and laid his hand on Angèle's shoulder with affectionate sympathy.

"You must not be discouraged, little one," he said. "Do you feel that you have strength enough to study?"

"Yes, sir," she said, in a trembling voice, "I have strength enough, to do anything which would insure success, only tell me what to do."

"Good! We will make an artist of you yet! Give me your address. To-morrow I will take you to

call upon a Professor of elocution, who will give you some lessons. He knows his business well, and I will recommend you especially."

"But," said Angèle, timidly, "how long will this apprenticeship last?"

"How like a woman!" he answered, shrugging his shoulders; "they expect to realize their visions the morning after they have dreamed them! They do not know the meaning of the word patience!"

"Ah! there you are mistaken," murmured the girl, smiling through her tears; "my only trouble is, that I have not money enough to live while I am studying."

He shook his thick, bushy locks: "Too bad! too bad!" he muttered. "That perpetual and degrading question of money always interferes with the best laid plans! When a woman has beauty like yours, my dear, she need despair of nothing."

After many compliments of this nature, he bowed her out, and the next day came in a carriage, at noon, to take her to the elocutionist, Saint Felix, whose school, in the Boulevard Montparnasse, was known under the name of the *Salle Corneille*.

Saint Felix was a man of sixty, closely shaved, with large, tragic eyes, and long grey curls hanging over his shoulders. He spoke with nervous volubility, and with an immense amount of gesticulation.

"My dear fellow," cried La Genevraie, as he entered, "I bring you a new Rachel—a rough diamond—which I confide to you! When you have cut it, you will find

—and the world will find—that it has plenty of fire—fire which will pale all the candles in the Conservatoire!”

He talked with an enthusiasm which was a strange contrast to his reticence and indifference of the night before. It was decided at last that Angèle should receive a course of instruction gratuitously, from Saint Felix, who would be paid by puffs in the journal edited by La Genevraie.

“Now you are started,” said this gentleman to Angèle, “but you must go to the theatre constantly to study all the dramatic machinery. Here are tickets for the Français. Take the mistress of your Hotel with you, which will conciliate her. Au revoir, my beauty!”

He left her at the Hotel after kissing her hand, and then walked down the street in his lofty, stately fashion, with his hat a little on one side, and his coat buttoned tightly around his waist.

Angèle went to the theatre, and was perfectly enchanted. Alfred de Musset's words charmed her ears and her mind. She watched the actresses when they were called before the curtain, and saw them bow low with smiling faces. Her heart thrilled with longing, and hope reigned triumphant once more. The next day she hastened with eager steps to the school, and commenced her new life. Three times each week, fifteen young girls and as many youths assembled in the Salle Corneille to take their lessons of Saint Felix.

The men were clerks and shopkeepers, who were theatre mad, and who had relinquished the counter for the deceptive shadows of dramatic fame. The women were grisettes, and Russian and Hungarian adventuresses.

These Bohemians made a singular impression on Angèle. The young men affected a certain skepticism, and at the same time were credulous to a degree. The women were bold and vain, jealous and excitable. Angèle, without being a prude, was modest and refined, and had brought from her country home, certain ideas of propriety which were constantly shocked and offended by what she saw and heard. By degrees she became accustomed to the novel atmosphere, and ceased to find it disagreeable.

Her companions gave her lessons in economy by taking her to a *Crémèrie*, where she could dine for twenty sous. She knew the women who let evening dresses, she even became familiar with that place which provincials regard with such horror, the Mont-de-Piété. Some of the young men tried to make love to her, but she coldly thrust them aside. The recollection of René des Armoises rendered her deaf to such sighs as these. She often thought of her poet, and looked for his name in the advertisements of new books. She said to herself:

“Where is he? When shall I see him again?” and worked on with energy that she might become more worthy of him. Old Saint Felix, who felt a tender

admiration for Angèle's beauty, lavished every care and attention upon her. She was making rapid progress. La Genevraie occasionally sent her tickets for the Français or the Odéon, and this was her only amusement.

She wrote every week to her mother, from whom she hid her disappointment, and tried to write gayly. She had received one long letter from Madame Sénéchal, in which allusion was made to her father's being indisposed. After this long letter a brief note came each week, and finally one evening, when she came in from the theatre, she found a telegram saying that her father was barely alive. She turned very pale; her first impulse was to rush to the Station, but she knew that the last train had gone, and spent the night in tears and self-reproach. She accused herself of being the cause of her father's death, who could not endure the idea of her being an actress; perhaps, she thought, with a shudder, he was dying at that very moment.

In the morning, while she was making her preparation for departure, the door was thrown open, and in came Madame Sénéchal, rounder than ever.

"My poor darling!" she murmured, as she pressed Angèle to her ample bosom.

The girl tore herself away.

"Is he dead?" she gasped, as she saw her mother's black garments.

Madame Sénéchal pulled out her handkerchief.

"Dead!" exclaimed the young girl, bursting into passionate tears and sobs.

There was a long silence, then Madame Sénéchal said:

"Forgive me, dear, for not having told you in time, but he would not have known you; he was unconscious from the time he was first taken until he died. I wished to spare you a needless journey." Angèle interrupted her by a reproachful look.

"I killed him! I know it! I feel it!" she cried. "Poor, dear father, how good he was! Ah, mamma, how could you be so cruel! why did you not let me kiss him? I never can forgive you!"

"No, my dearest," answered her mother, who was by no means scrupulous in her anxiety to console her daughter, "you are entirely mistaken. It was not you, who killed your father, it was that wretched Boblique, and then the warm weather on top of that, broke him down completely—his strength—and he was like a lamp whose oil is exhausted."

"And I was not there!" repeated Angèle, with renewed sobs.

The rest of the day was spent in talking of the dead father and husband, but when the girl was calmer, her mother took her hands, and looking at her admiringly, said:

"And what are you doing? When shall you make your debût?"

Angèle shook her head, saying she could not tell.

"That scamp, La Genevraie, has disappointed us all," exclaimed the good lady, bitterly. "The fortune, I

fear, will never be heard of, and now he is turning a cold shoulder on you; but I will stir him up a little, now that I am on the spot, for I have come here to live!"

She then went on to say, that she had rented her house to a neighbor, and had sold her surplus furniture, while the rest was to be sent to her by the railroad. She wished to find a small apartment as soon as possible, and this she succeeded in doing, on the fourth floor in a street which, as she told Angèle, was most conveniently near her Theatre, and "should you take an engagement at the Odéon, you won't be ten steps from your Theatre."

The furniture arrived, they settled themselves in their new home, and Angèle applied herself with new energy to her dramatic studies. Her mother always accompanied her to the Salle Corneille, and could not restrain her exclamations of admiration when Angèle recited a verse. The good woman had rather the air of compassionating the other girls, who could not reach her standard; a little more, and she would have gone the length of promising them her protection and patronage, when Angèle made her débüt.

One October morning, when Mademoiselle Sénéchal was rehearsing a scene from Bérenice, the rustling of a silk dress was heard in the ante-room. A lady of uncertain age came in with a rush. Saint Felix lifted his warning finger with a "hush!" but he did not succeed in his attempt to impose silence.

"It is wonderful!" cried the lady, "simply wonderful! The girl must come to my Thursdays, she must have a part in my play. Yes, my dear," she continued, addressing Angèle eagerly, "you play like an angel, and I intend to lecture La Genevraie, for not having brought you to my house. There you would meet Managers who would appreciate your talents, and who would assist you. I shall expect you next Thursday, without fail. Bring her to me, Saint Felix, or we shall quarrel."

"That is Madame de Busserolles," said Saint Felix, when the lady had departed. "She receives artists, literary people, and a good sprinkling of fashionables beside. It is quite a distinction to be invited to her house, let me tell you!"

Madame de Busserolles was insane in regard to the Theatre. She even wrote plays, and all the Theatres of Paris were besieged with her manuscripts, which, however, slumbered quietly in their envelopes. Tired of these useless efforts, she had her comedies played by young artists whom she picked up in the various schools of declamation. She paid them with bad dinners and thanks.

She was a little over fifty, and had preserved of all her youthful charms, only her blonde curls—which fell, like those of an English woman, each side of her face—and a pair of beautiful blue eyes.

It was said that she had been a great belle in her youth, and some people affirmed, with a wicked laugh,

that she had always adored La Genevraie, who had been for years a faithful habitué of her sal^on. If in Paris, he never missed a Thursday, and amused himself with paying this ripe beauty, the most preposterous compliments—compliments which made little Monsieur Busserolles grind his teeth with rage. This little man adored his wife, who tyrannized over him and ruled him with a rod of iron. It was he who managed the household and directed the servants. He found fault with his better half, only on one point, and that was, when she kept some of her guests to dinner, and finally, to keep him in good humor, it had been agreed between herself and her friends, that each guest should bring some dish. Most of these Thursday guests, took this arrangement in good part, so that the dinner on that day was like a picnic—the most extraordinary dishes, washed down by some very poor wine, raised by Busserolles on his own estate.

Occasionally La Genevraie promised to bring them a Manager who would bring out Madame Busserolles' comedy. This mythical Manager was the bane of Busserolles' existence; he was called on in this way for extra dishes and delicacies, at least once in every ten days, but the Manager had not yet made his appearance. The expectant host would wait until half-past seven, and then creep into the dining-room, and remove half the cake, or replace it with some which, being stale, he had bought at half price. It was in this sal^on—of an old hôtel in the Quai Bourbon—that Angèle

had her first experience in life as an artist. When Saint Felix and La Genevraie presented her to Madame de Busserolles the *salôn* was full. The habitués were mostly old and decayed gentlemen—pianists struggling for fame—artists without engagements—and several women who, no longer young, were inspired with aspirations for intellectual honors.

Amid these withered fruits and faded flowers, the only suggestion of youth and beauty, was a niece of the master of the house, Marthe de Boissimon, the daughter of a high functionary in the imperial mansion. Fair and plump, the young girl was very charming, and her aunt regarded her, and justly, as the great attraction of the house.

Angèle, who had only looked, as it were, through a key hole, at the good society of her little town, was highly pleased at seeing herself received, into what she believed to be the *élite* of the Parisian world. Her hand was at last on the door, which opened on the enchanted garden of her dreams.

In a dazed sort of state she took her seat. Before she had regained her composure Madame de Busserolles entreated her to recite some verses. Angèle rose and nervously fanned herself.

"Don't be troubled, my child," murmured La Genevraie; "give us something that will stir the blood of these old fossils."

The girl stood near the chimney waiting for silence in the *salôn*. Never were her eyes so blue, and her lips

so red. She began to recite her favorite poem—that of René des Armoises—with which she had charmed the Morel heirs.

Her voice became firmer as she went on, and she soon felt herself rise to the occasion. When she finished, the room rang with applause, and Angèle dropped her eyes to conceal the triumph she felt. When she lifted them again she saw René des Armoises before her, handsome, bold and gay, like a young Greek god.

“Upon my word!” he cried, “this is, indeed, a surprise.” His eyes thanked Angèle. He extended his hand to her as he said:

“I never liked my verses half so well; you have transfigured them!”

CHAPTER VI.

A NEW WAY OF ENTERTAINING.

SOME weeks later, one Thursday, Madame de Busserolles, half lying on her sofa, received the faithful. It was growing dark, and the room was lighted only by the very small fire in the vast chimney. The master of the house was dimly discerned in one corner, while the flickering flames, occasionally fell on the gold-bowed spectacles of a solemn personage, wearing a black wig and a decoration on his breast.

"Really, my dear Jolivart," said Madame de Busserolles, in a plaintive voice, "the ways of the Theatres are past finding out. I have a drama at the Odéon and a comedy at the Français, and I cannot get either of them read. You really ought to speak to the manager. My drama would be extremely taking, I am sure, and if you stay and dine with us to-night, you will have an opportunity of judging, for Mademoiselle Sénéchal, the artist of the future, will recite a portion of it with Saint Felix. I do not know what sort of a dinner we have. Tancrède?"

When Madame de Busserolles wished to invite any one, she always uttered her husband's name in a certain entreating tone, which quickly brought him to her side. This evening, however, he was utterly deaf to her voice.

The dinner was very scanty; three guests were already asked; and the last time he had been to his cellar, the poor little man was quite dismayed to discover that his wine was running low. In vain, therefore, did the lady call Tancredè. Tancredè gave no signs of life.

"We have a poor dinner—I see that," sighed the mistress of the house, "and you run the risk of starving to death, unless," she added, with a smile, "you should feel inclined to add a dish. Go and take counsel with Clairette. She will tell you what to do."

Monsieur Jolivart was quite able to give some points to Tancredè on the matter of economy. He hesitated a moment, and then, thinking probably that a refusal would look very badly, he rose and walked with considerable dignity to the kitchen, to confer with the cook, who at once suggested a chicken. Jolivart gave her the money, and, quite elated by his liberality, stalked back, with the air of a Roman Senator, to the salôn.

Fifteen minutes later, Saint Felix entered the house, and, knowing its ways, went to the kitchen, to inquire about the dinner and what addition he had best make. Clairette exhibited Monsieur Jolivart's tiny chicken.

"That's a mere pigeon," cried Saint Felix, contemplating it. Suddenly, a brilliant idea struck him. "Tell me," he said, "where you bought this rack of bones, and I will go and exchange it for a big capon."

Clairette thought it an excellent plan, and Saint Felix, as active as a squirrel, bounded down the stairs, to return in ten minutes with a superb capon.

"What the deuce have you got there?" said a full rich voice, and, turning round, Saint Felix perceived La Genevraie, draped in his ample cloak.

"Provisions, I presume," continued the journalist, whose aristocratic instincts revolted against Madame de Busserolle's picnics.

"Hush!" answered the other. "It is a capon, and I trust you will eat some of it."

"Not I! This house disgusts me! I will content myself with looking at you, and when I am tired of that I will go and sup at Brabant's. I prefer that to this miserly arrangement."

After Saint Felix had confided the capon to Clairette's hands, the two men entered the *salôn*, where they were soon joined by Madame de Busserolles and the other two guests, Angèle and René des Armoises. Since their first meeting in this same *salôn*, the two young people had seen each other several times. Madame des Armoises, who had come to Paris to join her son, and who was a cousin of the Busserolles, was often seen at these *réunions*, for her heart was set on her son marrying Tancred's niece, the pretty Marthe de Boissimon.

Des Armoises found little to attract him to the *salôn*, which he irreverently called a store-room for dried fruit, but now that Angèle was to be met there, the place assumed a new aspect.

The oddity of their meeting pleased the poet. Mademoiselle Sénéchal's beauty, too, had gained a new element since her arrival in Paris—an indefinable

attraction. René's restless, inquisitive, passionate nature delighted in sounding the depths of this fresh young heart, which he soon learned was an altar where burned perpetual incense in his honor.

He was in great spirits this evening, for his first book of poems had just appeared and elicited warm praise from the critics. His face was bright with success as he approached the young girl, just as dinner was announced.

They passed into the chilly dining-room. La Genevraie declined a seat at the table and stood by the stove, watching the festive scene with a very sarcastic expression.

René and Angèle chatted gaily, not knowing what they ate. Clairette brought in the capon as a third course. It was deliciously brown and tempting.

"This will never do," said the lady of the house to Jolivart. "I never allow such follies."

"It has swelled in cooking," replied the gentleman, somewhat amazed at the proportions assumed by his chicken.

Saint Felix laughed in his sleeve, and when the capon was placed before him, he helped himself freely.

"You are fond of capon, Saint Felix?" asked the hostess, gently.

"Extravagantly!" he answered, taking a generous slice of the breast, at which Tancrede was very angry. His annoyance was so great that La Genevraie asked for a glass, and at once proceeded to aid Saint Felix in

his mischievous plans, by emptying the bottle, which Monsieur de Busserolles watched out of the corner of his eye.

"I do wish, La Genevraie, that you would come to the table, and eat your dinner in a civilized fashion," muttered the host.

"By the way," exclaimed Madame de Busserolles, who felt the thunder in the air, "which is the dish Saint Felix sent?"

"My dish?" said that gentleman, boldly. "Oh, my dish is a capon."

"What!" exclaimed Jolivart, in a state of towering indignation, "I brought that chicken myself."

"Yes, you brought a chicken," answered Saint Felix; "but it was not a capon, and I took it back to the stall." And he told of the exchange.

The host and hostess were quite shocked. Jolivart was scarlet with rage, and reproached Saint Felix, who pretended to be very penitent. Angèle and René were absolutely convulsed, while La Genevraie, leaning against the mantel, with his eye-glass on his eye, smiled with a most diabolical expression. He finally sent for his cloak, and as he threw it over his shoulders, he said:

"Poor Busserolles! As I understand the matter, you have been cheated out of one chicken. I am going to supper now, and propose to drink the health of each of you in succession; and to-night I shall offer up a prayer, that in this world and the next, you shall have as many capons and as many chickens as you wish."

Saint Felix and Jolivart continued to look at each other like two gamecocks. Tancrède profited by the general disturbance, to place two dishes, intended for dessert, back on the buffet. The hostess, annoyed at a joke, which threatened to annihilate all her theatrical hopes, looked at René and Angèle, who were laughing, as only young people can laugh.

"Really," said the lady of the house, frowning, "I fail to see what there is, so excessively amusing."

Angèle struggled to regain her composure. She was growing nervous, and her laughter, like silver bells, rang through the room. Madame de Busserolles lost her temper entirely.

"Upon my word," she said, "I begin to believe that one had best think twice, before opening one's doors to strangers!"

The laugh froze on Angèle's lips. Her lips turned deadly pale, while the color suffused her brow. At that moment, the party rose from the table. Instead of entering the *salôn*, however, the young girl went on into the ante-room. Madame de Busserolles felt she had gone too far, for if Mademoiselle Sénéchal left, there could be no recitation of any portion of her play, that night.

"What is the matter with the child?" she cried, in a gentler voice. "Please, René, go and find out what has gone wrong and bring her in here."

René found Angèle wrapping herself in her cloak.

"Are you going?" he exclaimed.

"Certainly I am! I cannot stay in a house where I am made to feel that I am only received on sufferance."

Her voice trembled, and tears were in her eyes.

"I think you are right," said the young man. "You will not go alone, however; I shall go with you."

They departed together, and when they were in the street, des Armoises said:

"Foolish little girl! Such a trifle is not worth crying for! That old simpleton is not worth one tear from your eyes! Take my arm, we will walk along quietly, and this lovely moon will put us in good humor."

This friendliness comforted Angèle. She refused to think that the walk was long. She forgot the words which had wounded her, in her delight in listening to René's voice. The air was soft, and the Quai on which they stood, nearly deserted. The Seine ran on with a caressing, gentle murmur, in the moonlight.

"What a glorious night!" cried René. "My bosom's lord sits lightly on his throne."

"Because you have a foretaste of fame," said Angèle, with a smile. "All the people speak of you."

"Do you think I care for that?" he asked, contemptuously. "No, no, my ambition vaults higher, I assure you."

"Do you know what makes me very happy?" asked the girl. "It is, that I was the first to predict your success. How many times I have talked of it to Joseph Toussaint."

"Toussaint? Ah! yes, to be sure; and what has become of him?"

"I have no idea. He left Bay at the same time my mother did, and we have heard nothing of him since."

"With what an air of indifference you say that! and the poor fellow was much in love with you."

"Do you really think so," she asked, with eyebrows lifted in coquettish and affected amazement.

"I do indeed, and many a time have I been jealous of him!"

"You!" cried Angèle, and in this one simple word, surprise and joy as well as gratitude were plainly to be read, as also a subtle acknowledgment of René's immense superiority over the obscure Joseph. Des Armoises read all this, in the sweet young face, and he drank in, with the insatiable and eager vanity of an artist, the flattery of her voice and eyes.

"You are laughing at me," she murmured timidly, but her eyes were lifted to René's face, and in the moonlight, they seemed to ask the poet, if the little country girl had occupied his thoughts for even one brief hour.

René understood this silent question. "I am not laughing at you, sweet one!" he answered, for he was not a man to count his words or his oaths. "If you read my verses carefully, you will find more than one allusion to that ball where we danced together. I see you now in your simple white dress, with your cluster of lilies of the valley in your belt. That was the evening when I lost my heart."

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"And yet" — she sighed — "you went away!"

René, touched by the truth of these words, did not know what to say for a moment.

"Yes," he answered finally. "I went away, but my heart was torn with grief."

"Not so," answered Angèle, shaking her head, "those who go are not the ones who suffer. Those who remain are the sad ones."

"Dear child!" he exclaimed, really moved this time, and lifting the slender hand that was passed through his arm, he pressed his lips to her wrist.

Angèle caught her breath. Ah! that kiss on the deserted Quai in the moonlight! How many times did she recall it in after years! That brief second was engraven on her heart, with the minutest details of time and place.

In front of them, on the other side of the Seine, rose Nôtre Dame, with its rose windows and ogives, shining in the moonlight, a light gray mist was rising from the ground, and the cathedral looked like the gigantic shrine of some precious relic, sparkling with precious stones. The heavy carriages thundered over the distant bridges, whose gas-lights burned red, in the pale rays of the moon. Sailors hailed each other as they pushed their boats, and occasionally persons passing by, looked at the couple leaning on the parapet with curious eyes, but Angèle and René seemed to think themselves at the end of the world, for they neither heeded, nor cared for these glances. The poet held the

girl's hand in his, and the two stood motionless, looking down into the water.

"I love you," murmured René, suddenly, excited by Angèle's beauty—by the softness of the night—and still more by that wine of youth, which bubbled in his veins.

"Truly?" she asked, with earnest eyes. Then she, in her turn carried away, opened her heart to him.

"I have loved you," she said, passionately, "ever since the first day I saw you! You passed over that little bridge by the church, and I sat at my window and watched you. At the noise of the mill-dam, your horse started, but you let him see that you were master, and in the little excitement which followed, the rose in your button-hole fell on the ground. No one saw it but myself. It lay there until night. I was so afraid some one would pick it up, that I dared not take my eyes from it. In the dark, I glided out, and brought my faded treasure into the house. I ought not to tell you this, I know, for when you fully understand how foolish I have been, you will cease to love me."

"Dear child!" thought René, as he pressed her hand. "All she tells me, proves that I have a heart, a possession, which I had begun to doubt. I certainly must marry, and love her in return."

The clock of Nôtre Dame struck slowly, and all the churches in the neighborhood, repeated the sound in every possible variety of tone.

"Eleven!" exclaimed Angèle, aghast at the lateness

of the hour. "I must get home as quickly as possible." They turned their faces homeward, but did not move very quickly, however. The night was delicious, the air soft and balmy, and the spring time of their love entrancing.

Angèle related some of her girlish impressions, while he, in his turn, liked to bewilder her unripe judgment and develop her enthusiastic fancies by the expression of his own, which he threw at her feet, as roses are thrown before the images of saints in procession, on holy days.

Never did Angèle forget that night!

"Here I am," she said at last, as she lifted the heavy knocker of her door.

"Already!" answered René, taking both her hands in his in a tender clasp.

"Good night," she murmured; and then, as he left, she added, hurriedly: "Come and see us, won't you? Mamma would be delighted."

CHAPTER VII.

A YOUNG ACTRESS.

IT was ten o'clock, and Angèle, before going to her lesson, was breakfasting in the room which served the double purpose of *salon* and dining-room. The old oak chest of drawers, with its swelled front, brass trimmings and claw feet—the table, in the same style—the tall clock in the corner—all the massive furniture, in short—spoke of the provinces. On one corner of the table Madame Sénéchal had arranged the breakfast—an appetizing cutlet, a tiny pat of yellow butter and a brown roll, fresh from the Vienna bakery—and now bustled about, bidding her daughter eat every mouthful and grow fat. In vain did Angèle entreat her mother to breakfast with her. Madame Sénéchal turned a deaf ear to these entreaties, and, after her daughter had left, she devoured huge slices of bread and cheese, washing it down with a glass of water. She would willingly have deprived herself of the necessities of her life that her daughter might enjoy the luxuries. On her arrival in Paris, she resumed the trade she once learned, and worked by the day, and often far into the night, in a dressmaker's establishment.

This was not very lucrative toil, and barely paid the daily expenses. The money brought from Bay was

fading away rapidly. Angèle felt keen remorse on seeing her mother work so hard, but Madame Sénéchal only said,

"Never mind; I am used to it, and you can recompense me one of these days." Nothing weakened her confidence in the ultimate success of the girl. The tailor and the florist, who lodged on the same floor, were wearied to death by the mother's enthusiastic dreams.

"As soon," she said, "as my daughter makes her appearance, all Paris will ring with her name, for I assure you, actresses with Angèle's talents are not easily found, and she is good, too," continued the mother, with honest pride.

When Angèle was rehearsing her rôles in the dining-room, Madame Sénéchal persisted in having the door open, in the hope that some theatrical manager would chance to be coming up the stairs, and, charmed by what he heard, would rush into the room and offer a fabulous sum for an engagement. She had read of such a thing in one of her novels, and she placed the most absolute faith in such providential occurrences. On this especial morning, Madame Sénéchal was even in a more hopeful mood than usual. When she rose, she had consulted the cards, which had told her all sorts of pleasant things.

"Drink that chocolate," she said to Angèle, bringing it to her in a pretty china cup, with a silver spoon.

"Ah, you spoil me," cried the girl, kissing her,

warmly. Then, as she heard a step on the stairs, she looked round.

"It is Monsieur des Armoises, probably," said her mother, for René now called every morning.

"No, it is not his step."

Madame Sénéchal opened the door and uttered a cry — "Joseph Toussaint!"

"Yes, Joseph himself," said Toussaint, gayly; "and I have had the greatest trouble in the world to find you. But here I am at last, and overjoyed to see you."

He kissed Madame Sénéchal and timidly pressed Angèle's slender hands. His eyes were full of tears, although his lips smiled.

"Where on earth did you come from?" asked the girl.

"I have been in Paris some time," he replied. "I got very tired of Bay, and Boblique's office. The life there got to be intolerably dreary. I was thinking of going home, when I learned that my nephew, who is a soldier, was ill at Paris. So I said to myself, 'Joseph, my boy, that is where you are needed,' and off I came."

"And your nephew?"

"Oh, he is all right again; but I remain, having fallen into a thing which, I trust, will lead to satisfactory results."

Another knock was heard, and in came René, who seemed heartily glad to see Joseph, and as the hour had arrived for Angèle to go to the Salle Corneille, the two

young men insisted on going with her. On leaving the house, Joseph asked himself if he should offer his arm to Angèle, but, before he could decide, René had gently drawn the girl's hand through his. He resigned himself, therefore, to walking at their side, and they all three crossed the Luxembourg, where the bright, wintry sun was shining on the frost-bound twigs.

"Tell us what you are doing here," said René. "Are you in a law office?"

"No, heaven be praised!" answered Toussaint. "I have cut myself adrift from all that sort of thing. I have found a position as private secretary to a Senator. He is clever in thought, but without the faculty of expression; so I write all his discourses."

"Ah!" said René, laughing, "I see; and one of these days, you will end by uttering them yourself!"

"I hope so," answered Joseph, with quaint gravity. "I confess I am often struck — on seeing what I have written, published the next morning — at the eloquence of the words, and the roundness of some of the periods. I am grateful to this man, moreover, for allowing me, under the sanction of his name, to utter truths which may possibly do some good."

"Oh! that is your style, is it?" answered des Armoises, in a tone of light disdain. "You feed your soul on unctuous meditations."

"I do not feed my soul at all," answered Joseph, somewhat annoyed. "I am cleaning and purifying it! The oil in my lamp had grown thick. I am endeavoring

to restore its limpidity. Let me tell you what happened to me the other day."

"Go on."

"I went into a church one afternoon—Saint Germain-des-Prés. It was full of mysterious shadows. The pictures, the incense, and the candles burning on the altar of the Virgin, kindled a certain religious fervor within me. I saw a venerable priest enter a confessional. I followed him, and sinking on my knees—carried away by emotion—I began a recital of my life. I warmed up as I went on. I told the priest all my doubts, my hesitations, and my secret sorrows and hopes. My vanity became excited; I thought my words quite interesting, and was persuaded that my confessor felt the same. When I ceased speaking, the priest lifted his head. Had he been asleep, or did he wish to humble me? I can not tell, I only know that never was I so astonished, as when he said, in a gentle voice:

"‘My son, do you know how to read?’

"Imagine my feelings! I paid little attention to anything else he said. I merely remember that he advised me to read a certain little book, the name of which he mentioned."

Angèle laughed until she could hardly speak.

"I wish I could have seen you come out of that box," she said, at last.

Joseph looked much scandalized.

"You are like the Parisians now," he murmured.
"You laugh at everything."

"And this chilled your ardor?" questioned René.

"Yes, very much; and I have not yet recovered from the effect of that day."

By this time, they had reached the Salle Corneille, where Angèle took leave of them, and the two young men went off to breakfast.

"Then," said Joseph, "you regard Mademoiselle Sénéchal's life as decided upon? She will adopt that wretched profession—"

"Why do you use that word? Why is the profession of an actress wretched?"

"How can *you* ask such a question? Of course you literary men do not regard it with our eyes, but you can not deny, that to a young girl, and a country bred one beside, the influences and associations of a dramatic career must be very perilous. How, too, can Angèle be certain of success?"

"In art, one can never be certain. Success is a matter of patience and determination. One must do one's best, and wait."

"To learn to wait, is in itself, a good thing; but one must live in the meantime, and these people are very poor. You are fortunate, my dear fellow, in having it in your power to serve them, and obtain some engagement for Angèle."

For some reason, René did not like this. He shrugged his shoulders as he said:

"You totally over-estimate my influence. It is not an easy thing for me to induce a manager to bring out

one of my plays, and with what face could I, a fellow of my age, recommend a young girl of twenty? You are sufficiently a man of the world, to know the inferences which would be drawn at once."

"René's tone irritated Joseph, but he was forced to see a certain justice in what he said. When he first saw René with Angèle, that morning, he thought the poet loved the girl; but this conversation did away with that idea.

"If he loved her," he said to himself, "he would speak very differently. I would move heaven and earth to be useful to Angèle. No! He does not love her!"

Once persuaded that René was not touched by Angèle's sweetness and beauty, Joseph felt hopeful again. The episode of the confessional had moderated his leaning toward fanaticism, and he became interested once more in the affairs of everyday life. He came constantly to visit the Sénéchals, and fell more deeply in love with Angèle, than he was in those old days at Bay.

Madame Sénéchal welcomed him cordially. In her eyes, he was another adherent to her daughter's colors, and she felt that the time might come, when he would be very useful. She was also infinitely more at ease with him, than with René. To Joseph, she would disclose her petty economies, which she concealed from her daughter. Her means were almost gone, and the poor woman had learned the way to the pawnbrokers.

The watch and gold snuff-box of her husband, were in pledge, as were her gold earrings. It was Toussaint who had executed this commission, which he did with secret abhorrence. The amount raised on these relics was so small, that the young man added a considerable sum, which he had little difficulty in persuading Madame Sénéchal to accept.

Angèle realized nothing of all these privations and these shifts. She lived in a little world of her own. She was happy in the adulation of her poet—happy when she closed her eyes at night with the words on her lips, “he loves me!”—happy when she awoke in the morning, that she would see him that day. She had regained all her elasticity of spirits, and Joseph watched her with delight. René’s constant attention awoke no suspicion in his mind, for the poor fellow was so occupied in analyzing his own situation, that he was blind to much that went on about him. Then, too, preferring to see Angèle when René was not there, he took the mornings for his visits, when she was alone with her mother; and after Angèle had gone to her lesson, he would linger for an hour, listening patiently to the old lady’s lamentations, over the stupid indifference of the managers.

“Really, too,” said Madame Sénéchal, one morning, “it is quite time that something should be done, for we have hardly a penny left in the world. I have kept the grocer calm, by talking to him of the great future before my daughter. But, after all, these people have

no patience, and our credit is gone. We relied too much on Monsieur La Genevraie's promises, and he has not been near us for a month."

Toussaint listened silently, went away sooner than usual, and was not seen for a week.

"Another friend gone," sighed Madame Sénéchal. "It is always the way when people are in trouble." She was furious at Joseph's indifference, and abused him without mercy. René and Angèle were astonished at Toussaint's sudden eclipse. She could say nothing definite, however, as to the cause of her indignation against him, and one evening, while she was scolding vehemently, Joseph walked in with smiles and an air of mystery.

"Ah!" said the old lady, "I thought you had forgotten the road to this house."

"Forgotten it! By no means. I was anxious to arrange a little matter, however, before I came again, and it took more time than I thought it would. And now," he said, plunging his hands in his pockets and looking about him impressively, "I have a piece of news for you."

"News? Do you mean to become a Priest?" asked Madame Sénéchal, who was not yet softened.

"By no means. This is a question of entering a very different world! Guess!"

"You are to be married?" cried Angèle, laughing.

"No," answered Joseph, shortly, irritated at seeing her admit such a possibility; "you are all wrong.

I will tell you. My patron, the Senator, is an ardent Catholic, but by no means insensible to worldly pleasures. The Manager of the Odéon is his personal friend. I spoke to him of Mademoiselle's talent, and finally succeeded in obtaining a promise from him to use his influence with the Manager. He succeeded, and this is a letter which appoints two o'clock on Tuesday for an interview."

Angèle uttered a little shriek of joy, and, rushing toward Joseph, seized his hands and snatched the letter.

"Kiss him!" cried her mother.

Angèle obeyed, without stopping to think, and for the first time Toussaint felt the girl's fresh lips touch his cheek. He returned the kiss with deep respect.

The faces in the little room had all changed their expression. Madame Sénéchal was joy itself; René tried to look indifferent; and Angèle, after her first irrepressible joy, had become very thoughtful. She thought to herself how happy she would have been, had René brought her this letter, instead of Joseph. She was depressed at the thought that he had succeeded, where René had failed.

"I knew," cried Madame Sénéchal, "that you were a good soul, Joseph, and would never fail me."

CHAPTER VIII.

AMBITIOUS HOPES.

THE next morning, Angèle was awakened by a great splashing of water. It was a starch bath that her mother was preparing, "in order," the old lady said, "that your complexion shall be quite perfect when you make your débüt." The old lady never questioned the result of the hearing, which had been obtained for Angèle, and was building new castles in the air. She thought their present lodgings quite too obscure for her daughter in her coming celebrity, and she looked at apartments almost daily, wherever she liked the location. She ordered from a dressmaker a handsome black silk robe, trimmed with jet, which would, she thought, satisfactorily bring out Angèle's snowy skin. To pay for this dress, she sold the oak chest of drawers, for which she was offered a very good price at a *bric-à-brac* shop.

"You need not worry," said the good lady. "We shall be able soon to buy rosewood and mahogany!"

Finally, the fateful day arrived. La Genevraie, who had volunteered to take the girl to the Manager, appeared in one of his most eccentric costumes. He found Angèle waiting for him, in her new and well-made black silk, while her mother was smoothing its folds

with tender and reverential care. As the weather was fine, La Genevraie, quite proud of his fair companion, gave her his arm, and they walked. Angèle had not supposed that her interview with the Manager would have been on the stage itself. Such, however, was the case; and dreary enough was the scene by daylight. At the further end of the house two gas burners looked like stars.

Angèle went toward the foot lights and distinguished the orchestra stalls, where La Genevraie and the Manager were sitting. Over the edges of the boxes were thrown linen cloths, to protect the velvet and the gilding from dust. The same dismal winding sheets were laid on the seats of the parquette, producing a most sepulchral effect. In the obscurity the new silk gown was absolutely lost.

At a friendly sign from La Genevraie, Angèle drew a long breath and began to recite the grand speech in *Phèdre*, at the end of the fourth act:

" Ah ! douleur non encore éprouvée
A quel nouveau tourment je me suis réservée."

She had studied these lines with the greatest care, and her rendering of them had been highly applauded in la Salle Corneille. Her voice was full of passion and of pathos as she uttered the words,

" Ils suivaient sans remords leur penchant amoureux,
Tout les jours se levèrent clair et sereins pour eux."

She heard La Genevraie say, in a low voice: "Superb! what grace! and what a voice!"

The Manager, an old actor, with dyed moustache, checked the enthusiasm of his companion, and Angèle finished amid a silence that was far from encouraging.

The Manager begged her to favor them with something from the modern repertoire. She had selected the scene where Marion de Lorme throws herself at the feet of Louis XIII. and asks mercy for Didier. Although she threw into this scene all the energy of which she was capable, she keenly felt that her audience—to use a word that has recently crept into use—was not *enthused*. The voice which filled a drawing-room sounded poor and weak in this vast theatre. Her delicate features were without tragic force, and her gestures lacked ample grace. La Genevraie, as mute as a fish, was no longer in a mood to applaud.

The Manager went on the stage and addressed, for form's sake, a word or two of approval to Angèle. Several of the subscribers, who had sauntered in, also complimented the girl, but nothing serious or positive was said.

"Well, what is your decision?" asked La Genevraie of the Manager.

"I will write to the young lady and give her my answer, in a week from to-day."

Angèle bowed and departed.

"Come! come!" said La Genevraie, when they were

out of sight of the Odéon. "Don't look so wretched — things are going well."

He was afraid of a scene and wished to comfort her.

"Do you really think so?" asked the girl, with tears in her eyes. "I do not seem, to myself, to have made the smallest impression."

"A Manager is always cold, he prides himself on being so. Besides, he thinks if he were to show the smallest enthusiasm, it would lead you to expect a higher salary. You do not understand these people, my dear, they are regular robbers."

"Then you think I did pretty well?" continued poor little Angèle.

"You were magnificent, my child — magnificent!"

His words inspired the girl with hope and confidence once more. Alas! she had so much need of hope that she was not difficult to convince. Madame Sónéchal met them at the door.

"Well!" she exclaimed impatiently. "How soon does your engagement begin?"

"Nothing is decided yet," answered Angèle, with a smile, but La Genevraie went on to tell her, that they would know in a week. The mother was satisfied, for, thoroughly persuaded of her daughter's talents, she was certain that the decision could only be in the affirmative.

"They ought to be overjoyed to have you!" she murmured, as she wiped the dust from the beautiful black silk.

René and Joseph came in to hear the result, and La Genevraie described the scene with many embellishments. Joseph was thanked again, and Angèle looked tenderly into René's eyes. They dined merrily in the shabby dining room, and then they all went to the theatre, where La Genevraie presented them with a box.

Madame Sénéchal took a new apartment in la Rue de Rennes, and while she busied herself with her moving into her new quarters, did not forget the hours when the postman was due.

Angèle's anxiety was quite equal to that of her mother; as the days passed on the hope that had buoyed her up forsook her. She lost her appetite—was feverish and nervous—her attacks of somnambulism returned, and one night her mother found her in the dining-room half dressed and asleep.

"I must go out," she said. "They are waiting for me at the theatre."

"Poor dear child," murmured Madame Sénéchal, "even in her sleep she worships her profession." Then with tender precautions, she led her back to her bed and watched her, until she sank into a natural sleep.

When their furniture was moved, Madame Sénéchal discovered that the things which looked well in their modest rooms, had a very different effect in their new quarters. The curtains of white calico, the arm chairs where the hair was finding its way through the worn coverings, looked piteously shabby by the side of the fresh paint and gilding. The very concierge glanced

contemptuously, at the old fashioned furniture which their new lodgers were sending up to the fifth story. The old lady was much mortified, and a new mania took possession of her brain. Her husband had left to her three vineyards worth about fifteen hundred francs. She determined to sell these at once; to do this with the greatest possible speed, she felt compelled to go to Bay. It was hard to do this, before she saw the letter from the Odéon, but she begged Joseph to send her a telegram at once. She dwelt in her own mind, with considerable delight, on the effect which such a telegram as she pictured, would create among all her old friends.

One morning, therefore, after installing Angèle in their new home, she kissed her tenderly, promised to be back in less than a week, and departed by the noon train.

When she was alone the young girl went to work putting their rooms in order. She threw open the window which looked on a garden; a warm May sun shone in gayly. She was standing on a chair, nailing up some curtains when René entered gayly, with a great bunch of fragrant violets in his hand.

"I wish to be the first to decorate your room," he said as he gave them to her.

She took them and the poet's hand together, and then placing the violets in a vase, she buried her pretty flushed face in their cool freshness.

"How delicious!" she cried. "The very embodiment of spring!"

Then turning to her curtains she asked permission to finish her task. Stepping lightly upon the chair she lifted her arms high above her head, showing in all its beauty the rounded outlines of her bust; her head was thrown back, while a ray of sunshine glittered in her hair like an aureole of gold. Never had René thought her so pretty. The ribbons at her throat fluttered in the open air from the windows. Her cheeks were paler than usual, and a dark circle around her eyes harmonized with the unwonted carelessness of her toilette.

Des Armoises looked at her in silent admiration.

"That is done!" she cried, jumping down from the chair; and taking a low seat, she drew it to the side of her poet. The odd little smile peculiar to herself which seemed to affect only one corner of her mouth was on her lips.

"What have you to tell me?" she said.

"A great deal. In the first place, I stopped at the Odéon yesterday, and left your new address and insisted on a prompt reply."

"Ah! that reply!" sighed Angèle. "If you only know how I dread it even while I long for it. Suppose it should be a refusal!"

"Is your heart so set on the career of an actress?"

"Yes—and beside, I should feel that you would love me no more, after so humiliating a downfall."

"What an outrageous thing you are saying, child! I love you, sweet, not the artist."

"Would you love me if I were poor and in rags?"

"Child! child!" he exclaimed in a tone of passionate protestation, but his smile was gone, and a slight frown was on his brow. For to his artistic, luxurious nature, even the word poverty grated on his nerves like a discordant note.

"Why do you say such things?" he asked, half impatiently. "The woman whom I love, will never have — thank God — poverty to contend with, nor rags to mar her beauty."

They both relapsed into silence, through the window came the joyous notes of the blackbirds in the garden. Angèle was very serious, almost sad. Her long fringed lashes with their downcast lids, gave to her face a look of maidenly purity. René was much moved by her beauty. He snatched her hands and drawing her toward him, pressed a kiss on her full white lids. She was momentarily stunned by his vehemence, but when René, emboldened by her submissive silence, attempted to put his arm around her waist, she drew herself away hurriedly.

"No! no!" she cried, her brow, her cheeks and her throat flushed with scarlet.

Her eyes were at once so tender and reproachful, so loving and so sad, that des Armoises was touched, and turned away silent and ashamed.

"It is late," said Angèle, looking at the clock; "you must go now, but you will come to-morrow, will you not?"

"To-morrow? No," answered René, by this time

quite displeased with himself, that he had obeyed her. "I promised to devote to-morrow to my mother, who complains that she never sees me."

"Day after to-morrow, then?" She gave him her hands and said, with a charming smile: "Love me—love me well—for I am worth the trouble!"

And they separated; he in a whirlwind of passion, she, nervous and troubled. When the door closed behind him she went to her violets, and lavished on them the kisses which she had refused to René. She then sank into the chair where he had sat, and relapsed into thought, from which she was aroused by the concierge, who appeared with a letter, the sight of which brought her heart to her mouth.

It was a square, blue envelope, on which was her name, and in the corner these printed words, "Imperial Theatre—the Odéon." She ran to her room, locked herself in, and held the letter in her trembling hands, not daring to open it. That envelope contained all her future. Suddenly, drawing a deep breath, she tore it open, and devoured its contents.

Alas! it was simply a polite letter, in which, while the manager rendered all justice to her talents, he informed her that the company was full, and that it would be impossible to make any additions to it this season. There was not the smallest hope held out for the future, nothing but a pitiless refusal, disguised under the most courteous form.

Her heart swelled, her mouth became parched, her

eyes were riveted on this scrap of blue paper, which she had dropped on the floor, and which shivered in the wind from the window, like a living thing. Her fingers mechanically tore the envelope to bits.

"Refused! What would her mother say on her return? How were they going to live?

They had so fully counted on this engagement, that they had allowed themselves to become ~~swamped~~ with debts. Angèle saw nothing before her but poverty, that poverty in rags which, such a little while ago, had struck such a chill to her lover's heart. In the midst of this great shipwreck, nothing now was left to her but René's love, and would that love long resist the stings and arrows of outrageous fortune? A terrible fear of losing René now filled her heart. She longed for tears, but her eyes were dry; the blood rushed to her head, and her temples beat like sledge hammers. The painful throbbing was so intense, that the power of thought seemed paralyzed, but by degrees she realized again what had happened. She loathed the room she was in, and her eyes involuntarily turned to the window, from whence she could see a portion of the sunset sky. The sound of church bells reminded her of those old days when, leaning from her window in the Rue des Savonnaires, she listened to the same sounds, at the same hour.

Oh! those dear and careless days, how she wished they were hers again.

This great house, with its thin walls, through which

came the thousand discordant noises of a crowded Parisian interior—this room, without an association of any kind, filled her with shrinking disgust. She longed for the old sound of lapping water, the accompaniment of the vesper hymns. She listened with feverish eagerness to the distant bells. It seemed to her that her spirit accompanied the sounds into space, and that nothing but her tired body remained in that dreary room. It was a very singular sensation.

She shivered and awoke from her dull bewilderment. She closed the window, tried to unfasten her dress, but had not the strength, and strangely ill, with a wild fever in her blood, she dropped on the bed with a feeling of utter exhaustion.

Her sleep was haunted by a nightmare. She dreamed that she was buried alive, and that her coffin was sent to the canal that ran past the windows of her old home, and through the ripple of the water came to her the clear voices of the church bells. She tried to raise the lid of her coffin, but all in vain; she uselessly tore her fingers against the unyielding planks, and through all her struggles came the sounds of those persistent bells.

She woke with a start, and found herself standing at the door of her room, with her hands on the lock. Every one knows the sensation of awakening suddenly, in a room where one sleeps for the first time. Angèle had no idea where she was. The position of the windows, the bare walls, the furniture even, looked new

and strange. A ray of moonlight fell from an uncurtained window, and added another weird element to the place. Her brain was excited by fever. Was it delirium or hallucination? Some new articles of furniture cracked with a sharp sound, that by daylight she would not have noticed; the blinds rattled, and affected her nerves like a discharge of musketry. The ray of moonlight crawled over the floor like a phantom. She heard voices whispering in the dark corners, and with a wild shriek, she threw open the door and ran down the stairs.

The gas was extinguished, but the moon, over which the wind was driving light clouds, cast long rays of light on the stairs, and seemed to be accompanying Angèle in her hurried flight. Her terror increased, and she fancied herself pursued by the weird shadows which had driven her from her room. She went hastily through the lower corridor and rapped on the door of the concierge, calling to him in an entreating, piteous voice. He was only half awake, supposed that one of his lodgers wished to go out, pulled the cord mechanically, and fell asleep again. The outer door thus silently opened, and Angèle suddenly perceived, at the end of the dark corridor, the quiet street, flooded by the moonlight. It looked peaceful and attractive. She dared not go back to her room, and the girl was out into the street, and walked straight on. Her mind was strangely confused, only one idea took any form, and that was, the determination to find somewhere that

station, which was bright with lights, and where stood innumerable trains, ready to start. Among them there must surely be one for Bay. She must find the station, there was no time to lose, and she wandered about in that net-work of narrow streets between the Luxembourg and la Rue de Rennes, and became hopelessly entangled among them, going over the same ground again and again. Her feet, covered only with thin slippers, were bruised against the stones of the pavement. Her tired limbs tottered beneath her weight, and she sank on some steps in a doorway. Her dream still haunted her. She seemed to hear the sound of running water and tinkling bells. She was sitting motionless, with her head sunk on her breast, when a heavy hand grasped her shoulder and shook her violently.

"Well! well! little woman," said a policeman, "this is no place to sleep; you had best go home."

She shivered, and looked at him with wild, affrighted eyes.

"No, no! I must go—I must go away!"

"Where do you live?"

She made no other reply than to repeat these same words, "I must go away! I must go away!"

"All right! we will go, then!" and the man drew her arm through his and raised her to her feet. Angèle made no objection, but meekly obeyed him. He took her to the station house, and put her in a long, narrow room, fitted with camp beds, on one of which she took her seat, still repeating her refrain—

"I must go away ! I must go away !"

The intense heat of the room seemed to soothe her, after being chilled in the night air. She fell asleep, and slept the rest of the night.

In the morning she was awakened, and taken before the Judge, in the next room. Her fever had abated, and her mind was clearer. She looked wildly about her, and entreated in an agony of terror, that she should be allowed to depart, but her entreaties were unheeded, and she was somewhat roughly hustled into the presence of the Judge, who was just up, and very much out of temper.

He read aloud from a paper before him —

"A woman found in a doorway, either drunk or crazy."

Angèle shuddered from head to foot.

"Your name?" said the judge.

She gave it, and added an entreaty that she might be allowed to depart. Her voice was as faint and low as the breath of a sleeping infant.

"Where do you reside?"

She looked at him uneasily, but did not speak. A mortal fear of being sent back to the room, from which she had fled, now assailed her, and her tongue was literally paralyzed by this fear. Instead, therefore, of giving her address, she simply requested to be taken to the station where she could take a train for Bay.

"But you live in Paris," repeated her examiner, coldly; "give me your address, or I shall be compelled to commit you."

These questions, and this threatening tone, did their fatal work. The fever coursed madly through her veins again. Her blue eyes opened wider, and from her parted lips came the words:

"Oh! let me go; let me go to my father!"

"Who is your father? What does he do?"

"My father?" She hesitated, tried to collect her ideas, and then burst into wild sobs.

"He is dead!" she cried. "He is dead!"

Three men looked on at this heart-breaking scene. The Judge shrugged his shoulders and tapped his forehead lightly.

"Weak intellect," he said, slowly.

"I must go," repeated Angèle. "Oh! let me go!"

"Yes, certainly," answered the Judge, blandly; and turning to one of the policemen, he sent him for a carriage.

A few minutes later, Angèle entered a fiacre with one of the men. The idea that she was on her way to Bay, calmed her, and she had fallen off into a drowse, when the carriage stopped before the special entrance of the Préfecture which leads to the Infirmary. Here patients are examined by a physician. In the case of those whose minds are affected, this physician decides where they are to go. If it seems to be a temporary insanity, they are sent to one establishment; if the malady appears to be deep-seated or chronic, to another.

As soon as she entered the place, Angèle realized that she had been deceived. The two rows of cells,


separated by a narrow corridor, the grated doors, and the ghastly groans and sighs, told her the truth. She turned to fly, but she was caught, thrust into a vacant cell, and the door violently closed.

"They are all the same," said the man, pulling down his coat-sleeve calmly. "I can get along better with ten mad men, than with one mad woman!"

A mad woman! This cruel word was heard by Angèle. Memory returned to her, and she sought to prove to herself that she was not mad. She asked herself what she had done, that she should be thrown into this horrible spot, and she sank into a stupor.

It was in this state that the physician found her. He was a middle-aged man, wearing a white cravat, grave and plausible. At the sound of his voice, Angèle looked up, and seeing a person with the exterior of a gentleman, a little hope and self-possession returned to her. She begged him to help her and told him her story—not very clearly or connectedly, to be sure—but she told of her mother's departure for the country; of the letter from the Odéon; of her flight in the night, from her room in the Rue de Rennes.

The physician listened attentively. The girl's beauty, the music of her voice, all made an impression upon him. He seemed to be somewhat perplexed, however. Angèle's words were sensible enough, but her eyes were too bright, her manner too excited by far, and to allow her to leave the place, might be to let loose a most dangerous maniac. The patient was very interesting



certainly, and he was touched by her words and voice ; but his duty remained the same, and he could not afford to be sentimental.

"Very well then, my child, you shall go," he said, rubbing his hand over his smooth chin. "I will order you to be taken back to the Rue de Rennes."

"Oh ! no, not there !" she cried in an agony.

"And why ?" he asked, in a most insinuating voice. "Is it not there you live ?"

"Yes ; but I am afraid — so afraid !"

"Afraid of what ?"

"Of everything — of the furniture, which cracks so strangely — of the moonlight crawling over the floor — of whispering voices in the corners."

"Ah ! you hear voices, do you ?"

"Yes, strange voices, which frighten me."

"Precisely," murmured the doctor, with a faint smile ; and he wrote down,

"Melancholy monomania, with partial delirium, hallucination in regard to voices."

Then the doctor rang the bell, and when the nurse appeared, he said, gently, to Angèle, in his soft, melodious voice :

"Take her to Sainte-Anne's."

CHAPTER IX.

SAINTE-ANNE'S.

RENÉ DES ARMOISES rose the next morning in the best possible spirits. The day promised to be fair. He was eager to see Angèle again, and regretted that he had promised to give the day to his mother. He insisted on her going into the country with him, the better to conceal his restlessness. They spent several hours in the *Bois de Meudon*, where the hawthorn was coming into bloom. He returned to Paris that night, happy in the mere fact of existence — intoxicated by the fresh air, and the smell of growing things.

The next day, he hurried to la Rue de Rennes. His lips had touched the cup, and he wished to drain its contents. He did not believe in satiety, and he determined to obtain the kiss, for which he had so vainly petitioned. Just before he reached the house, he met Joseph Toussaint coming away with a pale, troubled face.

"She is not there!" cried Toussaint, "and no one knows where she is." And he went on to tell all he had learned. He had gone up to Angèle's room, the day before, and had found on the floor, the letter from the manager of the Odéon.

"Then," he said, "I understood it all, and, knowing as I do, the peculiar temperament and undisciplined nature of the girl, I fear the worst. I spent the whole of yesterday looking for her, but all in vain. I even went to the morgue," he added, in a lowered voice. "The concierge just told me that the police had been to him to make inquiries, and I think, from what they said, that Angèle must be at the station-house."

Des Armoises started back, and in a hoarse voice, exclaimed:

"We must go there at once!"

"Yes," said Toussaint; "but just think what an awful thing it is! Imagine that poor child, shut up all night at the station with the wretches that are there! Oh! Paris! Paris!"

René hailed a passing fiacre, and the two young men drove to the station, where began a long succession of useless questions and detentions. René became furiously angry, while awaiting the arrival of the head of the bureau. At last they learned the terrible truth.

"Mad!" cried René, "you are all mad together, I think!" and he dashed out of the room; but it was too late now to go to Sainte-Anne's.

The next morning, the two friends found themselves at an early hour, before the high, white walls of the asylum. Within, they encountered new delays, and when, at last, the presiding deity of the place condescended to receive them, he said, in answer to their inquiries:

"Yes, the person of whom you speak, was here, but she left this morning."

"Where has she gone?"

"To La Salpêtrière."

"But it is a burning shame!" cried René, impetuously. Mademoiselle Sénéchal is perfectly sane. You have been fooled by some one!"

The Director shrugged his shoulders.

"You will allow me," he said, with a smile of cold disdain, "to place more confidence in the judgment of my medical man than on yours."

"But it is simply infamous," continued the poet, and I shall make the whole thing known to the public, through the journals."

"Just as you please," answered the dignified functionary.

When they were in the street, Joseph turned and looked up at the high walls.

"What are we to do now?" he asked, despairingly.

"Something, at all events," answered René, his eyes flashing indignant fire. "I have it! Telegraph to her mother. She is really the only person who has a right to claim her daughter."

They despatched a telegram to Madame Sénéchal; René remembered that he had a certain friend, who could facilitate his entrance to La Salpêtrière, and the next day, through the influence of this friend, he was able to see the Director.

René, in this whole affair, showed the greatest pos-

sible energy and determination. He was one of the many men whose passion for a woman redoubles in the face of obstacles. It was incredible, he declared, that Angèle, so bright and charming one day, could have gone mad in twenty-four hours, and loudly asserted that it was one of those audacious stupidities of which one only too often hears. It may also be remembered, that about this time the newspapers were violently attacking the law of 1838, in regard to the treatment of the insane. René swore he would never rest until Angèle was at liberty.

"Do you know," said Toussaint, looking at him admiringly, "that I was very much mistaken in my opinion of you? I fancied that you were made without a heart—that your mind had drained it dry."

They were informed at La Salpêtrière that Made-moiselle Sénéchal was under the care of Dr. Spiral, who alone could allow them to see her. "As to myself, I can but give you a permit to enter the house itself, and this permit can only be used by one of you."

"I shall use it," said René to Toussaint, imperiously, "and you will wait for me in the court-yard."

Joseph hesitated a moment. "You are right," he said, with quivering lips, "you will know better than I, what to say to the doctors."

The Director showed René into the wing reserved for the insane. "Dr. Spiral will be here soon," he said, "but remember that he is very strict. Interest him in this young person, if you can, but I warn you,

that if you attempt to communicate with her without his consent, that I shall be forced to withdraw my permit."

He walked through the corridors and saw the solid doors on each side, with their iron bars and bolts—the baths where the patients are placed, with only the head free. He heard the rattle of keys, as the assistants hurried past, with huge bunches at their girdles, and caught a glimpse of some poor crazy creature, with disordered hair and wild eyes, who crouched in a corner at his approach.

Fifteen hundred poor wretches lived under this roof, if the existence they endured, could justly be called living. Every variety of mental malady was there assembled, classed and ticketed.

René found Dr. Spiral, when he reached his office, washing his hands, like any ordinary person. The poet, making a great effort over himself to be humble before this great man, told him as briefly as possible Angèle's story and the cause of her illness.

"I know the case. It is a most interesting one," said the Doctor, as he polished his finger nails with the towel.

"Can I see her?"

"See her! By no means. She has been too much excited. A brain fever—congestion of the brain, I may say. We shall cure her, but absolute quiet and repose are essential."

"It is absolutely impossible that her malady is more

than the insanity of fever," cried René, "for on the evening she disappeared, she was as gay as ever and quite as clear-headed."

The physician smiled, as he inspected his finger-nails once more. "You may think so, but you are quite mistaken. That is one of the most subtle forms of insanity. In your eyes the girl's mind is unimpaired; in mine it is seriously affected. She has certain symptoms that are unerring, as, for instance, she wakes with a start from her sleep, and trembles with imaginary terrors, and when allusion is made to the circumstances under which she came here, she shrinks and cowers —"

"Ah, sir!" interrupted René, "how should you or I behave, think you, if we were arrested in the middle of the night, and put into an insane asylum?"

The physician smiled coldly. "To show you," he said, "that I am right, I will let you see her, but you must give me your word not to move from where I place you."

He opened a door looking out on the inner court and he himself went into a room opposite. René stood and looked through the panes of glass, which had been carefully whitened, but the paint was scratched off in several places.

The Doctor soon reappeared in the court, accompanied by Angèle. He recognized the simple black cashmere dress as the one she had worn, when he last saw her in la Rue de Rennes. Her head was uncovered,

and the beautiful chestnut hair, of which she was so proud and arranged with such charming coquetry, fell in disordered masses on her shoulders. Pale, and with an anxious look in her sweet eyes, she followed the physician, who walked with his hands in his pockets.

The poet's eyes filled, and he felt a strange choking in his throat, as he saw the fair young creature in this horrible place. He closed his eyes for a moment, and when he opened them Angèle was no longer to be seen—only the Doctor, who came back with his slow and stately stride.

Des Armoises returned to Toussaint, to whom he recounted the painful scene. "It is horrible!" he cried, as he finished.

Joseph listened, with his eyes fixed on the barred windows of the asylum.

"What are you thinking about?" said René.

"I am thinking," answered Joseph, "of the many simple girls in the provinces, who idly dream in the twilight, of the joys of life in Paris. If they only could see these walls and hear this story, they would shiver with salutary horror, and would relinquish forever, their hopes of leaving their grass-grown streets, and prefer to grow old in their country homes."

"Come!" replied René impatiently. "We must do something."

Angèle had been taken by the Doctor into a room in the "harmless" ward, which was furnished with two long tables, around which about fifty of the patients were

working. A piano stood open at one end of the room. At first sight there was nothing singular in the appearance of the assembly, but on closer examination certain eccentric details made themselves apparent — bizarre toilettes, odd gestures, vacant smiles, and voices without the smallest variation in their tones.

One girl, wearing her hat and with a card case in one hand as if going out to pay visits, had spread on her work box about twenty photographs. She was pricking these assiduously with her needle, talking all the while in a low voice. Another had on her lap, a travelling bag packed with baby's clothes; she opened each tiny shirt, peered into every sock, shook the skirts and dresses vehemently, as if the dust that fell from them would disclose some great mystery, and then carefully folded and replaced them in her bag, only to take them out again immediately, and enact the same scene.

Angèle took a chair and her work, just as a woman with gray hair falling over her shoulders, rose, and with her finger on her lip, went on tiptoe to the piano, whose notes she began to touch lightly. Suddenly she played a gay prelude, and then sang in a voice which was still fresh, a fragment of a popular song:

“Mignonne Cécélla,
Ah! Ah! Cécélla.”

This song made on Angèle a most profound impression. It brought back her childhood. She remembered the shady square at Bay, where on spring afternoons

the little girls on their way home from school, sang and danced for an hour before supper. She again drank in the aromatic freshness of the willow branches, with their yellow fluffy catkins, which was borne in armfuls to the church on Palm Sunday. She saw her father standing on the doorsteps waiting for her, with a kind smile, and her tears dropped on the towel she was hemming.

She had been delirious all the time she was at Sainte Anné's. Her fever had left her now, but in its place was utter exhaustion, and although her memory had returned to her, she was too weary to exercise it. She vaguely thought she was in this place, through a mistake which would soon be rectified. She was, however, a little astonished, that neither her mother or her friends came to find her. She had asked permission to write, but the Doctor forbade the nurse furnishing her with writing materials.

It was in the night however, that she was most wretched; the dismal sounds about her, kept her from sleeping, and she sobbed in lonely misery in her narrow iron bed. She thought constantly of her father, and had come to believe that her incarceration in this asylum was in consequence of her undutiful conduct toward him, and she accused herself of being the cause of his death.

The day after René had seen her as we have described, the girl had a surprise which brought a ray of hope to her heart. He came to the Hospital with a

package of clothing for Angèle. In this package he had placed a hundred trifles which should show the girl she was not forgotten — her thimble — her half finished embroidery — a prayer book, and lastly a branch of the yellow catkins, which her mother had brought from Bay.

The good lady had returned the night before, and her indignation passed all bounds when she heard what had taken place. She burst out in objurgations against Paris and the Parisians, the government and the police. She insisted that Joseph should accompany her at once to the Hospital, where she asked in authoritative tones for her daughter.

"Nonsense!" she cried. "Angèle mad! I never heard anything so preposterous. There never was any insanity in our family, thank God! My daughter is the victim of some plot; her companions are all jealous of her talent — and — but there is no use talking about it. I want her at once."

The Doctor was considerably disturbed by the scanty ceremony shown by the old lady, and not over patient by nature, he now began to grow very angry, and declared that Angèle should not leave the Hospital until he believed her to be absolutely cured.

"An insane person," he said, "may become at any moment a public danger. The law gives me the right to detain her, and I shall take advantage of that law."

As the dispute threatened to become violent, the physician rang the bell and bade the servant show

Madame Sénéchal the door, "who," he said roughly to Joseph, "is quite as mad as her daughter."

René was summoned as soon as the hurt and angry mother reached home, and the next day she began, under his advice, a series of personal applications to magistrate after magistrate. She told them her whole story and that of her husband, and wearied them to death, which fact did not predispose them in her favor.

Poor Joseph, whose self-appointed duty it was to go about with this terrible woman, began to lose courage. René in the meantime went to La Salpêtrière daily. He had determined at all risks to give Angèle a note which he held in readiness, and which contained a warning, that she was soon to be subjected to a series of questions, and he begged her to be careful how she answered them.

He hoped each day that some happy chance would allow him to give this note to Angèle, but none offered itself. He spent two hours daily at the asylum, and his constant presence evidently annoyed the physician, while the nurses and certain of the servants, had come to know the handsome youth, who was so persistent in his inquiries for the girl with the beautiful blue eyes. They detected a romance, and every woman, whatever she may be, even a nurse in an insane asylum, keeps in a little corner of her heart, a certain amount of sympathy for a love affair.

They talked to him of Angèle, and one of them even went so far, as to infringe on the rules by speaking to

Angèle of the handsome young fellow, who walked up and down the corridors every morning.

One morning this same woman having seen Angèle alone in the court, went and told René, at the same time — either by accident or intention — leaving the key in the door of communication. Des Armoises hurried to the glass window. Yes, she was there, nervously looking toward the door; it seemed as if some instinct had told her that the man she loved was near. René took from his pocket the note he had prepared, and held it in his hand. Angèle turned abruptly at this same moment to the door, and opening it wide saw René. She ran toward him crying loudly :

“Take me away! Oh! take me away!”

This scream had been heard, the Doctor ran from his office, and the nurses all hurried to the spot. Angèle was dragged away, but not before René had time to slip his note into her hand.

“Ah! poor thing!” murmured all the women in chorus. “She has seen him at last!”

The Doctor was in a towering rage, and spoke very angrily to René, who replied in much the same tone. The result of this altercation was that René was never allowed to cross the threshold of Salpêtrière again.

The poet had seen the girl for a moment only, but that moment had shown him, that she was losing flesh and color, and he was certain that she could not endure this life much longer. He, too, was growing thin under his anxiety and suspense. His mother noticed

this, as well as his low spirits, and began to suspect that some affair of the heart was troubling him; finally, one day at dinner, when she saw her son send away his favorite dishes untouched, she became irritated and spoke out.

"What has gone wrong with you?" she asked.

"I will tell you," replied René. He always found it impossible not to talk of the things which interested him. He told his mother the story of Angèle.

Although Madame des Armoises turned very pale as she listened to this confidence, her features were set like stone—hard and pitiless. All her maternal jealousy was aroused. She felt absolute hatred for Angèle—for that low-born girl, who might ruin the future of her idolized son.

"This, then, is why you are so wretched?" she replied, with cold bitterness. "You can think of nothing but an actress—and what an actress!—graduated from la Salle Corneille. It is simply preposterous!"

"That may be," answered René, who was very impatient under contradiction or opposition; "but I love her; and it seems to me that my confidence deserves a little more sympathy from you."

"I hate that girl!" said Madame des Armoises, almost frantically. "She makes you neglect your work, forget your ambition, neglect your social duties and your mother! I hate her, I tell you, and I hope, for your own happiness and mine, that she will never leave the place in which she is."

"Mother! mother!" cried René, profoundly shocked. He choked down the indignant words on his lips, tossed his napkin on the table and left the room. He went at once to find Joseph, and told him of what had taken place at Salpêtrière.

"Angèle will become really mad, if this goes on much longer, and I shall do some rash act."

"Keep calm," answered Joseph. "I have spoken to my master, and I know he will do something."

In fact, the Senatorial influence was productive of the best results, for as soon as it was known that a person of importance had taken the affair in hand, the administrative machine condescended to move a little faster. And, finally, Joseph told his friend one evening, that Angèle would be examined the next day, and if the result were favorable, that she could be removed at once.

Then the anxious mother discussed the matter with the two young friends—what questions would be asked, and was there no danger of their being so insidiously shaped that they would confuse her?

Fortunately, Angèle had read René's note. These few lines were to her a folio volume. She was certain now that René loved her and would never abandon her. So that, when she was ushered into the presence of the Examining Board, she was so thoroughly on her guard, that the precision and clearness of her replies astonished even Dr. Spiral.

When the examination was over, the Director decided

to give a certificate of health, and informed the poor mother — breathlessly waiting in the next room — that they could come for her in two days.

"Now," said René to Madame Sénéchal, "it will never do for your daughter to go back to those rooms, which have no other associations to her than those of horror and loneliness. I took a tiny furnished house at Vèlzy, near the Bois de Meudon, some little time ago, that I might have a quiet place to work in, and I shall be most glad to put it at your disposal. We will go there to-morrow, and put it in order for your daughter."

Madame Sénéchal thanked him, but looked a little embarrassed. Des Armoises, absorbed in his new project, did not notice this, however. Joseph, whose sensitiveness was much greater than his friend's, detected her uneasiness at once, and concluded that it was some pecuniary difficulty which troubled her. He returned the same evening, and had no great difficulty in obtaining from her the statement that her purse was utterly empty. He then insisted on her acceptance of a note of five hundred francs, and as he slipped it into her hand, he said:

"Everything is very dear in the environs of Paris, and your daughter needs nourishing food. Oblige me by saying not a word to any one, of this money."

Madame Sénéchal accepted the favor at once. She had no scruples where her daughter was concerned. Besides, what could the poor woman do?

Consequently, Toussaint went off, joyfully rubbing his hands.

The day came at last, when Madame Sénéchal received her daughter in the parlor of the Institution. When they went out and saw a carriage standing at the door, Angèle drew back, with a troubled look.

"Where are you taking me?" she asked, anxiously.

"To a place," said René, "where you can enjoy the coming of the spring—where you can live in the woods and fields—which will do you far more good than all the prescriptions the whole medical faculty may write for you. Coachman, drive to the Western Station."

CHAPTER X.

BIRDS AND FLOWERS.

THE house that René had taken, stood outside the village, and near the wood, and was surrounded by an orchard, veiled by cherry trees and tall raspberry bushes. It was thus hidden from the scrutiny of inquisitive neighbors. The lower windows could hardly be seen at all through the flowering mass of vines, while the upper ones looked out on a view that was calculated to calm the most troubled soul, for the waving tops of trees extended as far as the eye could reach on the right; occasional openings showed a glade golden with yellow broom. A slight floating mist indicated the fish ponds in the depths of the forest.

On the left, was a plain, covered with young rye, which rustled in shimmering waves under the bending branches of the apple trees, all pink and white with blossoms. When, the morning after her arrival, Angèle opened her window and looked out, she uttered a cry of delight, and her eyes filled with tears. The birds were singing gayly, and the notes of the cuckoo came from the depths of the wood, while the confused humming of insects was the sonorous bass to the concert. The air was full of sweetness from the orchard, and it seemed to Angèle that she was born anew. The soft

breeze blew away the remaining fog in her mind, and all recollection of the hospital. She felt much as people do, when on a mountain height they see the clouds break and the blue sky appear.

Angèle adored René. To her former admiration and love, a profound sentiment of gratitude was now added. Had he not rescued her from that horrible place? Had he not for a month, spent all his mornings at Salpêtrière, watching over her—supporting with resignation all the rebuffs of the physician—he, too, who was so proud and so headstrong.

Never once did it occur to her, that Joseph Toussaint deserved any portion of her gratitude. Love is proverbially selfish, and Angèle, in this case, proved no exception to the rule. Joseph was forgotten. When he appeared at Vélzy, that evening, she thanked him to be sure, with all that grace which she imparted to her smallest act. This reception delighted the poor fellow, who fortunately did not see the eager hands she extended to René, when he, pushing open the door, stood in the bright sunlight, with a cluster of lilies-of-the-valley in his hand, looking as gay and as full of vitality as one of the young gods in the Iliad. Fortunate, too, for Joseph's peace of mind was it, that he did not hear the words René uttered in the girl's ear, nor her low murmur in reply.

The "thank you, dear Joseph!" with which the girl took leave of Toussaint, was not much, but enough to quicken the beating of his heart, and as he

sat that night at his desk, writing the rounded periods, with which the Senator, the following day, would delight a listening crowd, these words continued to ring in his ears.

From the light imprint left by twig and leaf on a block of coal, the savant is able to construct an entire prehistoric Flora. So with that simple phrase, did Joseph re-erect all his castles in Spain, the building of which he had originally begun in Bay.

Angèle seemed to have done with the theatre for the present, and he made up his mind, that she should never more have anything to do with the profession. For him to be firm on this point, he must be able to offer her a secured position. To this, he must find a lucrative and steady field of labor. If he were not rich, he was beyond the reach of absolute poverty, and he felt that he could carry his head high, if he had a wife and a family. The thought brought the color to his cheeks. Yes, Angèle must be his wife. He would watch over and guard her. The moment was opportune; this miserable termination of her theatrical career must have disgusted Angèle, and cured Madame Sénéchal of her senseless ambition. He would strike while the iron was hot, and propose to the young girl at once. Audacity was not among Joseph's characteristics, and the mere idea of entering the little cottage at Vélzy for this purpose, nearly took the young man's breath away.

"Ah!" he murmured, "If I only had the golden tongue of René des Armoises!"

In the meantime, things went gayly on at Vélzy. Thanks to Toussaint's considerate and timely assistance, the household expenses were duly paid. They had a woman come by the day for the heavy work, while Madame Sénéchal, who was a very dainty cook, attended to that part of their daily life.

At the end of a week, Angèle looked like a different creature. Her color had returned, and the restlessness of her eyes was entirely gone. She never spoke of the theatre, but said constantly, that she was never so happy before in her life.

Madame Sénéchal was less enthusiastic. She did not like to walk; she preferred people to trees; she lived in a perpetual state of terror in regard to caterpillars, earwigs and snails, and declared that life in the country was dull and wearisome. She regretted the noise of Paris, the long saunters past the lighted shop windows in the evening, the chat in the *lôge* of the concierge, the novels from the circulating library, and the evenings at the theatre. She still continued to sew for the dressmaker who had first employed her, and when she could bear it no longer, she pretended that business took her back to Paris. René, on the contrary, declared that the odor of asphalt, on these warm May evenings, was unendurable. He consequently came regularly to Vélzy. He had hired a horse and rode through the woods. Angèle learned to expect him each day, at the same hour, and went down the lane through the orchard to meet him.

She heard afar off, the rapid trot of his horse. The color mounted to her face the nearer the sound came, and when he appeared, she would gladly have turned and fled, that he might not see how deeply she was agitated.

Immediately on René's arrival, they went into the forest, and strolled in the direction of Vélzy, through the shady paths carpeted with velvety, green turf, soft to both foot and eye. Sometimes, when he could win a holiday from his Senator, Joseph was of the party. He adored the country; flowers, grass and trees bewitched him. He knew the haunts of each wild blossom, when and where to look for them.

"The birds," he cried, "are the orchestra, which celebrate the marriage of the flowers; or may it not be that the flowers, like those gay carpets hung, on fête days over balconies, bloom and display their beauty, to celebrate the marriage of the birds?"

René and Angèle looked at each other, and smiled silently. Had they been urged to say of what they were thinking, they would have answered that the flowers and the music of the birds, "were in honor of the love in their own hearts."

When Joseph was not there, the lovers had Madame Sénéchal as a chaperon. She certainly was not a difficult or burthensome one, for when she had gone about ten steps, she took her seat at the foot of a tree and pulling a novel out of her pocket, said she would await them there.

Then the two young people, left to themselves, enjoyed the charm of being alone together, amid this exuberance of life and growing things. Sitting under the beeches, the soft air brought to them the intoxicating odor of lilies of the valley and hawthorn. They came back at sunset, with their arms laden with flowers, which they arranged in huge stone pitchers, while dinner was being prepared.

When they sat at the dinner-table, the windows were opened, and the raspberry bushes and the honeysuckles pushed their slender branches between the curtains; and when it was dark, they sat on the porch and watched the stars come out, one by one, and René explained to Angèle the various constellations.

By this time Madame Sénéchal usually fell asleep in her chair, and the poet possessed himself of the girl's slender hand. The young people would have sat thus all night, but for Madame Sénéchal's sudden start and assurance to René, that the moment for the last train was near at hand.

Strangely enough, in spite of the daily intercourse and the familiarity of their association, René was really less bold and infinitely more patient than in Paris. A secret and indefinable sentiment of jealousy, moderated and controlled his exacting and passionate nature. He feared to have the air of asking to be paid for the sacrifice he had made for Angèle. The mere thought revolted him. That any one could suppose him guilty of such vulgarity and meanness, touched his pride and enabled him to control his passion.

This man, who ordinarily professed a sovereign contempt for the doctrine of moderation in pleasure, now was contented to drink the cup of his felicity, drop by drop. Singularly enough, returning health and spirits imparted to Angèle a certain expansiveness of manner and speech which was quite new in her. Without a thought of wrong-doing, she lavished upon René every mark of affection which could show him that she regarded herself as belonging to him, and to him alone, for the rest of her life. The tender clasp of their hands, the kisses exchanged on the doorsteps, the long, loving glances, were, one and all, like the links of a chain, drawing the lovers closer and closer together.

The passion, which, on the one side, was honest, frank and reckless, was, on the other, impetuous and unrestrained, and was ever increasing, like a mountain torrent; but it was only too certain that the day would come, when this torrent would dash them from their feet, and bear them down an abyss, from which they could never rise again.

One evening, at the end of May, Joseph and René remained to dinner, and Madame Sénéchal complained bitterly of the length of the evenings in this quiet, secluded spot.

"Would you like to go to the theatre to-morrow evening?" asked René. "If you would, I have a box presented to me, which is entirely at your disposal."

The old lady accepted joyfully.

"You shall go too?" she said, turning to Angèle.

"You are rusting out here, and it will be good for you to enter a theatre."

"No," answered the girl, "I much prefer the forest, thank you! I have taken a vacation of three months. In that time I do not intend to talk or think of the theatre. In the autumn we will make a new start, and I will try for an engagement. You will find some one in town to go with you, and I will keep house."

The good lady objected, saying that Angèle could not stay there alone in such an isolated spot. It was finally decided, however, that the woman who came by the day, should sleep there the next night, and that Madame Sénéchal should leave by the early morning train.

The next day, while Angèle's mother was on her way to Paris, René was riding through the woods in the direction of Vélzy. He intended to spend the whole day at the cottage, and, wishing to surprise Angèle, he left his horse in the village and walked on. When he entered the path that ran through the orchard, he walked softly and on the grass, that his footsteps might not be heard. He reached the dining-room window, and, looking in, saw Joseph Toussaint, installed on a large sofa, opposite a table, where Angèle sat, hulling strawberries.

Joseph had made precisely the same calculations that René had done, and had determined to take that day, to open his heart to Angèle, when he could be sure of seeing her alone and without interruption. He

had come, therefore, to Vélzy without being invited, but his courage had now deserted him, and he had not one word to say to Angèle, who, however, did not object to his silence, and hulled the strawberries, wrapped in happy thoughts.

On seeing Toussaint, René was furious, but when he entered the room, there was no trace of disturbance on his countenance. Toussaint, however, blushed to the roots of his hair, and was thankful for the cool darkness of the room. Angèle turned with a smile to greet her lover.

Through the vines, swaying in the breeze, over the window, came an occasional gleam of sunlight, powdering the girl's hair with gold, and falling on her white throat, just seen at the opening of her striped cambric peignoir. Her arms were visible under her loose sleeves in all their dimpled roundness; her fingers, stained by the fruit, fluttered between the basket and the china bowl. Every motion was full of dainty grace. Occasionally she would select an especially large berry and put it in her mouth, with a gay little laugh.

In this dimly-lighted room, Angèle's beauty was fresher and fairer than ever. The fragrance of the strawberries mingled with a pot of carnations, on the window sill, and made René wish more earnestly than before that their charming tête-à-tête had not been spoiled.

“How happens it that you have got away from your desk?” he said to Joseph, in the cold, hard voice which was peculiar to him when annoyed.

"It was such a glorious day," said Joseph, good naturedly, "that I could not stay there. I cannot work steadily in the spring, it is no use to try; I grow restless."

"Spring has a bad effect on you, Toussaint; I supposed you inaccessible to temptation."

"I!" cried the poor fellow. "Alas! I am an absolute Saint Anthony, beset on every side."

He sighed, and with a glance at Angèle, went on in his own quaint phraseology—

"Do you know, there are times when my soul reminds me of a warm summer afternoon, full of perfume, and the gentle hum of insects—my reason sleeps then in this slumbrous quiet—but in the twilight, remorse, like bats"—

He stopped, for he saw that his words fell on unheeding ears. René was looking at Angèle, whose eyes were riveted on her task. He was irritable and impatient, and Toussaint gave no signs of departure.

Finally des Armoises arose, and knocking his dusty boots with his cane, said:

"Well, now that we have ascertained that there is nothing we can do for Mademoiselle Angèle, we will leave her to her domestic duties. Come on, Toussaint."

"I thought," answered Joseph, "that we might be allowed to stay to dinner."

"In the absence of Madame Sénéchal," René replied, "it would be anything but proper!"

"Is that so?" murmured Toussaint, quite confused at this little lecture on propriety, administered by René.

"Do you agree with our friend, Mademoiselle?"

"I don't know anything about it," she answered, laughing, to conceal her embarrassment, and she pretended to be very busy with her strawberries.

"Come on, my dear fellow," urged René, pulling out his watch, "we must start; we have only just time to catch the train."

He hurried Toussaint off, and the two hastened to the station, Joseph quite unhappy at the failure of his plan, while René, on the contrary, was radiant and talkative. When they arrived at the station, he said:

"I shall leave you here, as my horse is in the stable, and I shall ride him back to town. Au revoir, my dear philosopher!"

He went in the direction of the stable, thinking that Toussaint's suspicions might be aroused, and that he might take it into his head to watch him, but after he got out of sight he turned a corner quickly and hurried back to the cottage.

He found Angèle just finishing her dinner.

"Ah!" she cried, maliciously, while her happy face gave the lie to her words. "Why did you not go back to Paris with Joseph?"

"You are sorry I did not, then?" he asked, seating himself unceremoniously at the table, and helping himself to strawberries. "Send me away, if you choose, but first be so good as to give me a glass of water, for I am dying of thirst."

She rose, brought a plate, and insisted on waiting upon him, seeming to find infinite pleasure in the anticipation of every wish. When he had finished, she removed the dishes and rearranged the room. She was so delighted by René's return that she listened to his voice—it seemed to her—with a keener pleasure than she had ever done before, and in her joy, she totally forgot her mother's directions, and neglected to tell the woman not to go home that night.

It grew dark without the lovers once remembering that they were alone.

Angèle lighted a lamp, and placed her little work-basket on the table.

"Is not this delightful?" she asked. "René, are you happy in being here with me?"

"I am very happy," he said, in a low, caressing voice.

"Poor Joseph!" murmured Angèle, leaning against the window, and pressing her burning cheek on the cool, fresh leaves of the raspberry bushes; "he is entrenched behind his desk now. Do you not feel a little pang of remorse?"

"No, not the least."

But poor Joseph was not behind his desk; on the contrary, he was not very far away. When he reached Paris, it suddenly occurred to him that he had been very simple, and decided to return by the next train, and carry out his original intention.

"I went there to dare all, and I will go back," he said, half aloud.

When he reached the wood, however, he began to wonder what he should say to Angèle. He had dined, and even drank a bottle of claret, in the hope that he might find a little courage at the bottom of the bottle.

The sun was setting, and he sat down by one of the fish ponds and listened to the frogs among the reeds—a distant tinkling cow-bell, and the voices of children at play—it grew later and later.

"This will never do!" he cried, starting to his feet, and he strode rapidly on. When he reached the garden gate he was, however, quite shocked to find how late it was.

"I can't help it," he thought; "I will see her and talk to her to-night."

He walked up the path overhung with honeysuckles. Never were they so sweet before, and never in after life did he breathe their odor, without the choking remembrance of that damp, dewy night—the tangled path and the starry summer sky above. At a certain point in this garden walk, he could see into the dining-room, and this is what he saw and heard: the lamp was burning on the table, and he saw two heads through the vines, while voices broke the silence of the night.

First he distinguished that of René. He was repeating a poem, in a voice all vibrating with passion; when he had finished, Angèle's soft tones were heard.

"How beautiful!" she said. "Ah, Love! why are you so indolent in these days!"

"I am indolent, sweetheart, because I can think only of you. No one can serve two masters—Love and Art—you fill all my heart, to the exclusion of everything else. I am living a poem, to-day with you."

"But will you not work a little for my sake?" she said, timidly, extending her two hands while she spoke.

He grasped them and covered them with kisses, not only the hands, but the girl's arms as well.

Toussaint could bear no more; he bit his lips until the blood came, and, careless of the noise made by his footsteps, he rushed away through the woods. Under this rain of kisses Angèle's cheeks blazed, afraid of herself and of him. She started up, and took a chair near the table and the lamp.

The room was filled with the fragrance of the honeysuckle.

"Why do you sit there?" asked René; "why do you leave me?"

"Because"—she hesitated.

"Because"—he repeated, imperiously.

"I do not wish you to kiss me," she replied, timidly.

"You do not love me!" he cried; "you do not know how to love!"

And without looking at her, he went to the other side of the room, and sat down on the divan. Her tender heart was touched, at the thought of having wounded him, and she soon found her way to his side.

"Do not be angry with me," she said, "your cold-

ness cuts me to the heart. I do love you—and I do know how to love!”

René's arm slipped round the girl's waist, and the poet kissed her unreprieved—the nightingale sang in the garden—and the honeysuckle was sweeter than ever.

Toussaint, lying in the forest, heard the birds' divine notes, and breathed the fragrance of the honeysuckle; both seemed to him forevermore the accompaniment of the cruel deception from which he was suffering.

“And I never suspected it!” he cried, bitterly. How blind I was! They must have taken me for a fool! I had no chance against a fellow like that—so handsome, and so wonderfully gifted. I ought to have seen this at once, and kept my distance.”

And almost involuntarily he began to think of the parable of the poor man with one lamb, who saw himself robbed by his neighbor, the owner of vast flocks.

“Des Armoises had so much! art and pleasure—glory, and applause! and I—I possessed only that one tiny ray of hope!”

He uttered a groan. A nightingale's song rose full and free—in reply, as it were—the bird's notes were taken up by another, and then another, until it reached that casement overhung with vines. Angèle started.

“Go!” she said; “my love—my life—you must depart!”

CHAPTER XI.

MOTHER AND SON.

THE usual Thursday guests were taking coffee in the salon of the Busserolles. The long windows opening on the balcony gave a glimpse of the Seine with its boats, and of the Quai à l'Hôtel de Ville, and the tops of the trees, yellow in the light of the setting sun. The host mounted guard near the liqueurs, and followed with an anxious eye the movements of those guests who were inconsiderate enough to fill their glasses themselves.

Madame de Busserolles was extended on her chaise longue, and talking in a low voice with Madame des Armoises, while her niece, Marthe de Boissimon, was putting a lump of sugar into the cup which La Genevraie held toward her.

"What is René des Armoises doing in these days?" asked Monsieur Jolivart, as he sipped his coffee.

"What you, my dear fellow, will never do again," answered La Genevraie, disdainfully. "He is making love! It is springtime, and birds and boys all do the same thing."

Madame des Armoises looked up quickly, and glanced with anxiety at La Genevraie, and then at Marthe, who tried to look indifferent.

"I heard," continued Jolivart, "that he has withdrawn his play because he could not attend the rehearsals, and that he now spends all his time in the Bois de Meudon."

"I dare say," answered La Genevraie indifferently, "he is just at the age when a young man throws his money—if he has any, that is to say—out of the window. But after all Madame de Busserolles is to blame for the whole affair."

"I!" cried that lady in great astonishment.

"To be sure, Madame. You and only you! Do you remember the night when Angèle Sénéchal went away from here in tears? Well, Madame, René comforted her, and in doing so, lost his own heart."

"You are perfectly insupportable," cried the angry hostess.

La Genevraie was quite unmoved by her indignation, and exulted in his little joke that had created so much excitement. Madame des Armoises rose hastily and invited him to go with her out on the balcony.

"Tell me," she said entreatingly, "how long you have been aware of my son's folly? Ah! my dear sir, you can have no idea of how cruelly it has mortified and distressed me!"

Her tone was very bitter. La Genevraie contemplated for a moment the clear-cut features of this imperious looking woman. She was still beautiful, as autumn is beautiful in its decay.

"Ah! dear lady," he said, "you take things in too

tragic a fashion! You see them through the blue spectacles of the provinces, and make a mountain out of a molehill."

"I am no prude," she answered quickly, "but I am disturbed at this affair, because this creature makes him forget his work, his duties, and his ambition. I have not seen him for a whole week. Do you think there is nothing in this to disturb a mother?"

"Pshaw! It is a mere passing fancy, and some fine day he will come back to you entirely cured."

"Then it may be too late. I have made certain plans for him. I want him to marry a young girl whom you know. She has beauty and mind, family and fortune, and the whole thing was going on swimmingly, when he became bewitched with this little Sénéchal."

Her rage seemed to choke her: they were both silent for a moment or two. The noises of the street and the sounds of the piano on which Martha was playing the beautiful "Blue Danube," came to them.

"How selfish children are!" exclaimed Madame des Armoises suddenly. "I have lived only for him. When his father died, I was still a very young woman. I refused every solicitation to marry again; was unwilling to allow any person to claim any part of my existence, or distract my attention from René, to whom I desired to consecrate my life. I gave him everything—my time, my youth, my heart! I counted the cost of nothing which could make him happy, or add to the prosperity of his Future; and now when the time has come

that he could reward me for these sacrifices by according to me the only thing I have asked of him, he turns his back and deserts me!"

Large tears filled her superb black eyes, and rolled slowly down her cheeks. La Genevraie watched them mechanically, and thought that at thirty, this woman must have been wonderfully beautiful.

He was quite touched, and lifting her white jewelled hand to his lips, he kissed it, and said sympathetically:

"Do not grieve so much, dear lady. If I can serve you, command me. I am not precisely the stuff out of which preachers are made, but still if you say so, I will go and talk René's very head off."

"Oh! pray do speak to him," she exclaimed eagerly. "I shall be forever grateful! Coming from you—with all your experience of life—your advice and entreaties would have double the weight of mine, and as you are disinterested, your reproaches too would affect him when mine could not. Make him blush for his conduct. Induce him to break with this girl to-morrow, and forever. Time presses, and the person of whom we speak begins to tire of waiting," and she glanced toward the piano where Martha was playing the last notes of the waltz."

"To-morrow! To-morrow is rather short notice," replied La Genevraie, blandly. "Supposing I succeed, and this liaison is as serious as you suppose, you must give René time to break off the affair in a proper way. There are certain steps which should be taken in such matters. She will suffer."

"Let her suffer!" interrupted Madame des Armoises, in a tone that was inexpressibly hard. "It will be her just punishment. Do I not suffer too? For a whole month have I known one peaceful, happy moment? I have been jealous, but I have also been anxious, for I never sleep until he comes in. Let her suffer now—it is her turn. Will you see René to-morrow?"

"Yes, Madame."

Madame des Armoises returned to the *salon*, while La Genevraie remained on the balcony, looking at Paris. The gas was being lighted along the streets, and the life of the summer evening had begun. The corners of his insolent mouth were drawn down in their usual disdainful fashion.

"Every one for himself!" he thought. "Yes, that is always the way. Were the roofs of Paris lifted, one after the other, one would behold only selfishness, groveling like those insects that one sees, when a stone is turned over. The selfishness of the mother, who grudges any portion of the heart of her children—the selfishness of the lover, eager for the possession of her whom he loves—of the ambitious man of letters—of the courtier and of the artist, who thrust aside all who stand in their path—the selfishness of the vicious for his vices—of the tradesman for his gold—of the priest for his chapel. On the whole, I am inclined to think that this mother is the best of them."

During all this time René was revelling in bliss, like those golden beetles who live among the roses. He

had a room in the village, and early every morning he went to the cottage. Madame Sénéchal allowed the lovers to do much as they pleased. All about them seemed calculated to show them how sweet was life. Never was a spring so lovely. The acacia blossoms rained on the turf, the lindens exhaled their heavy sweetness. The woods were full of flowers, and the nights were delicious, and the lovers were as happy as if this life were going on forever.

One thing alone disturbed René's peace of mind. Angèle's mother, seeing his attentions to her daughter, naturally regarded him as her future son-in-law, and treated him with a certain familiarity, even sometimes permitting herself certain allusions, which never failed to bring a cloud to the poet's brow.

This was the first wrinkle in his rose leaves — the first thing which recalled him to the vulgar common-places of the world — and one day, when two or three annoyances of this kind had taken place, René, for the first time for a week, alluded to business matters, which called him to Paris. He told Angèle he adored her, and that he should return that night, and departed.

He walked slowly through the wood, thinking of what Madame Sénéchal had said, and by the time he reached the station, was thoroughly out of temper, and when he arrived at the terminus in Paris he was by no means serene again. He was walking through La Rue des Rennes, when he felt a hand on his shoulder.

"I was just going to see you," cried La Genevraie,

gayly. "As the mountain would not come to me, I determined to go to the mountain. Where on earth do you keep yourself? Your actors are all grumbling. If your play is ever to be brought out, now is your chance. It is true that you are head over heels in love, but after all, that is no excuse."

"In love! Who says so?" asked René, with a constrained laugh.

"Every one. They say you are acting a delicious little idyl. That your Chloë is lovely I know, but still you are not a schoolboy. You should take things more coolly."

"I love according to my nature, passionately—with my whole heart!" answered the poet, in a piqued tone.

"So much the worse for you, then."

"What on earth do you mean?" asked René, impatiently.

"I mean that you should have more sense. Where is this mad passion to lead you? To a foolish marriage? If so, good-by to art. Art is done for, so far as you are concerned, and we will read the requiem over the bier of René des Armoises, the poet."

"You are very much mistaken. Love will never prevent me from working."

"I am mistaken, am I? Very well. I will show you to the contrary. You will marry Angèle with the right hand or the left, and then you will quarrel with your mother. Now, I have heard, and I think I have been correctly informed, that your father left you, in

your own right, very little, and that your mother has nearly all, for the term of her life. Now you will be poor, my boy, and, if your mother won't assist you, how will you live?"

"I will work," said René, triumphantly.

"You will try to work, I dare say; but you are a poet, and, worse still, a luxurious one. You want flowers and perfume, music and mirrors—everything, in short, that belongs to a life of refined sensuality. Where will all these come from, when your mother draws her purse-strings? and what will you, your wife and your wife's mother do then?"

"I will write plays——"

"If you can. But the *métier* of an author is like a game of chess, which one wins only after long and patient combinations, and a man is not always in the mood to work and wait when beset every morning by two women! Do you know what will become of you? Look at me! and La Genevraie stood still in the middle of the sidewalk, with his back well hollowed, his hat a little on one side, and a bitter expression about his mouth. Like you, I had talent, enthusiasm and hope. I was as full of promise as an apple tree of blossoms, in the month of May. I ruined myself running after a pretty brunette. Women take our money, our time, our strength, and our common sense. Thanks to them I have led a hand to mouth existence—living from day to day—scratching off clever articles on the corner of a table in a restaurant. I have never had

time to condense myself on a book. Thus, in spite of my cleverness and my sense, I have achieved nothing. Let my fate be a warning to you, and don't allow your life and your future to be ruined by Angèle!"

"According to you," said René, smarting under the lash of La Genevraie's words, "an artist should live the life of a monk!"

"Precisely! that is just my idea."

"Well, then, that is not my idea! An artist requires to love and be beloved."

"Go on, then, only for Heaven's sake imitate the selfishness of the greater poets—Goethe, for example—who abandoned Frederica Brion the very day when he realized that she was a hindrance to his path to fame. Give up your love while it is young, don't wait for old age to wither it and render it troublesome."

"Angèle is but twenty," answered René, with a conceited smile, and she has some years yet, before you can call her old."

"Age comes quicker than you think, my dear fellow. Besides, you cannot give your wife, if you marry against your mother's wishes, the dainty toilettes you like. She will wear made-over dresses—dresses which have lost all their freshness—old fashioned hats, and well-darned hose; her hands will be red, because she has been compelled to assist in the kitchen, and her fingers will come through the ends of her well-mended gloves. You like pretty things—delicate laces—silk stockings—ruffled skirts, and the like. You will get

to look on Angèle as ugly, when you see her go out in the guise I have described, and you will begin to notice wrinkles at the corners of her mouth and about her eyes. You will say: "Bless me, how old she is getting!" You will wonder that you did not take my advice. Break with her now, my boy, it is the truest kindness to her, as well as to yourself."

During this cynical harangue, des Armoises frowned and grew very sober. La Genevraie understood him thoroughly, and all René's passionate protestations had not thrown powder in his eyes.

His idea of squalid poverty was to des Armoises the most revolting in the world.

"I cannot break with her," he murmured, slowly, "both honor and delicacy forbid my doing so."

La Genevraie looked at him out of the corner of his eyes.

"Ah!" he thought, "you have begun to talk of duty. We are getting on pretty well."

"I do not exactly understand," he said, aloud.

René said a few words in a low voice.

La Genevraie shrugged his shoulders.

"If you are right," he said, "the whole affair can be settled on a money basis. The mother is queer—the daughter queerer—for you know as well as I, that Angèle is not altogether right in her head. That affair of La Salpêtrière showed that, and you must not allow yourself to be entangled in these spiders' webs."

René bit his lips. A faint remark of generosity and

passion protested and revolted, still La Genevraie felt that the entering wedge was there.

"Come," he said, "you can think this over at home. Night brings counsel. Dine with me, and then we will see some pleasant people."

He hailed a carriage, and he and René got into it.

"Ah!" thought the journalist, eyeing his companion, "you talk of Love, Faith and Loyalty! You do not even know the meaning of the words. You are all alike — Selfish! Selfish!"

CHAPTER XII.

A FATAL BLOW.

INSTEAD of returning to the cottage that evening, René wrote to Angèle, that he was detained in Paris by urgent business, and he remained there four whole days. After this idyl — this month of seclusion in the country, he found a novel flavor in the excitements of Paris.

One morning, however, as it rained, he remembered Angèle, and concluded to go and see how she had borne his absence. The nearer he got to her, the more repentant and compassionate he became. He was a little troubled, however, as to what explanation he should offer. He wondered how he should answer the questions she would ask, and finally his compassionate mood changed to one of intense irritation.

"Upon my word," he said, "La Genevraie was right, the chain begins to be heavy already."

By this time René was midway in the forest path. Through the fog he caught sight of a tall figure approaching.

"Is that you, Joseph?" cried the poet.

"Yes, it is," said Toussaint. •

"What the deuce are you doing here, wandering about like a ghost?"

"I was thinking," said Joseph, "of the short duration of things. A month ago, all the cherry trees were white with blossoms, and now they are withered and scattered, the nightingales are heard no more, and all the birds are silent, except the finches in the hedge; they keep up their shrill staccato cries."

"Is that a parable?" asked René, in a sarcastic, but slightly embarrassed tone.

"Perhaps. But listen, des Armoises, I want to say something to you—something which has burned on my lips for days—and as we are alone now, this is my time."

He hesitated, and then fixing his honest eyes on the poet, he said:

"Angèle Sénéchal loves you!"

"I beg your pardon?" and René lifted his eyebrows with an air of cold surprise.

"Angèle loves you passionately," repeated Joseph, not in the least disconcerted. "I know this, so do not deny it."

"Well, and what then?"

"And do you love her?"

"My dear fellow!" exclaimed the poet, impatiently, "if a man has a chance of pleasing a girl as pretty as Angèle, he must be as simple as the virtuous Israelite whose name you bear, not to avail himself of it."

Toussaint shook his head. The evening before, he had seen René at a concert with two artists, and two or three conspicuous beauties, and the good fellow was

not pleased. He thought that René could not be very much in earnest if he found any amusement in such companionship.

“Do you love her,” he continued, “as a man ought to love a woman whom he wishes to make his wife?”

“Upon my word,” cried René, angrily, “it strikes me that you are going a little too far! What is the meaning of all these questions? Is it to amuse yourself at my expense, or are you fulfilling a commission?”

Joseph laid his hand gravely and affectionately, on his friend's arm.

“Do not lose your temper. I am not executing any commission, and I am not actuated by curiosity. If I speak to you in this way, it is because of our old friendship at Bay. It is because you once extended your hand, and said to me, ‘let us be friends;’ and because I believe myself never to have forfeited my claim to that friendship. It is because of my warm admiration for you as a man, and an artist, that I venture to say to you, if you love Angèle, you must marry her!”

He was much agitated, and René, moved by the tone of his companion's voice, turned his eyes away and seemed ill at ease. He struggled with his emotion.

“My dear Joseph,” he said, “your advice shows the goodness of your heart. I do certainly love Angèle, and would gladly make all and every sacrifice for her, but you raise a most complicated question. In your honest, quiet life, you see none of the impossibilities which start up like weeds and thorns, around this

marriage. My mother's obstinate resistance, the prejudices of society—of the world in which we live—the precarious condition of my finances—”

“And these are the things, then, which deter you?” interrupted Toussaint, sadly and indignantly. “I am as poor as you, and I love my family quite as well as you do, but, if this young creature had given me her heart, I should have carried her off to Albestroff in triumph. I should have shown her to my ten brothers and sisters, and said:

“This is my wife! If you love me, you must love her! As to money, I would have gained it by the sweat of my brow. Can it be possible that you, with your youth and your talents, are afraid to run the risk of marrying a woman who adores you?”

“Bless my soul!” exclaimed des Armoises, “you talk as if a man's mind were a roll of ribbon, where yard after yard could be measured off to order! I cannot write in any such way, I tell you; I am not a mere machine. I must have entire liberty of mind and body for any work that is worthy of my name and time; marriage, therefore, seems to me a most dangerous experiment for a true artist.”

“Your words only apply to a marriage without love. Listen to me a moment more, des Armoises! In Art there must be Faith, and Love is Faith! That poet,” cried Toussaint, eager to convince this man, who had robbed him of his only treasure, and now stood cold and unmoved before it—“that poet who brings tears

to our eyes when we read his words in solitude — that poet has true genius, and the talisman that has unsealed his lips, love alone can have given him. How happy those are, who love and are beloved ! ” he continued, and in a choked voice, said — “ Marry Angèle ! ”

René was cutting off the clover blossoms with angry movements of his cane.

“ You are right, perhaps,” he replied, in a constrained voice, “ but I fancy you would see things differently, if you were in my place.”

“ If I were in your place ! ” Toussaint could say no more, emotion overpowered him.

Des Armoises looked round at his friend in astonishment, but on seeing his face, he realized all that was passing in the poor fellow's mind.

He turned away his head, and gnawed his moustache a moment, and then said :

“ This is neither the time nor the place, to discuss this question. I must see Angèle and talk with her. Good morning ! ”

“ Good morning,” repeated Toussaint, in a tone of utter discouragement, which expressed more clearly than any words could have done, how little he felt himself to have gained by this conversation with René.

Des Armoises hurried on, displeased with himself, and excessively indignant at Joseph's presumption in meddling in his affairs. Notwithstanding all the young man's protestations, he was convinced that Angèle or her mother had induced him to ask these questions.

This belief was a convenient excuse for him, and in his eyes justified all his annoyance, and, in fact, made him feel that he was the injured party.

Angèle was alone in the cottage. Madame Sónéchal had taken flight to Paris again, and would not return until the next day. Although unhappy at René's absence, she was not alarmed, as his note had reassured her. Besides, she was never exacting toward her poet. She said to herself that a man like him, could not remain in the seclusion of the country, far from all literary associations, and she reproached herself for having made already too great demands on his time. Her position toward René did not fill her with shame or misgiving. The shallow education she had received — her mother's rambling talk, culled from her novels — her superstitious belief in luck, and in the fortune told by the cards — had all prepared her to receive the lessons taught by the associations in the Salle Corneille. These, and her natural levity and wilfulness all acted together, and the result was such as our readers have seen and suspected.

Angèle cared little for the opinion of others. René's love fell like a magnificent theatrical curtain between herself and the world. The only thing that really disturbed her was, lest her health should prevent her *début* in the autumn. She was agitated, nervous, but not frightened. She was absorbed in these thoughts while, with old gloves on her pretty hands to shield them from the briers, she, armed with a pair of scissors, went down

the garden walk to cut her roses. The sun had not quite conquered the clouds, but an occasional gleam would kindle into brilliancy each drop on the leaves, which were greener and fresher from the rain.

Summer flowers bloomed on either side as she walked. Crimson carnations, purple phloxes, tall, stately hollyhocks, and a wealth of roses. Thousands of bees darted about, and the cherry trees were heavy with their scarlet fruit. This abundant vegetation, this profusion of glowing colors, were in unison with the abundant harvest of love in the girl's heart.

When she saw René, she threw down her scissors, pulled off her gloves, and ran to meet him. Then, as she saw the cloud on his brow, she drew back suddenly.

"What is it?" she asked, fearfully. "Come in; my mother is away, and you can talk freely."

Without a word, he walked straight to the dining-room, she, pale and trembling, following him up the narrow garden path.

When they stood facing each other, with the door closed, he said abruptly —

"I have just seen Joseph, who has preached me a long sermon, to prove that I ought to marry you at once. Is it your mother who selected him as ambassador, or did the idea come from yourself?"

She uttered an exclamation of indignant surprise.

"I can understand," continued Des Armoises, "how these ideas may be in your own mind, but I confess

that I question the propriety of discussing them with strangers —”

“Joseph has spoken falsely!” cried Angèle. “Neither my mother nor myself have seen him for a fortnight. It is a pure invention of his —”

“He did not use your name,” replied René, whose heart softened on seeing Angèle’s emotion. “It was my own inference. I took it for granted that he must come from your mother or yourself.”

“And could you really, René,” she answered, in a tone of tender reproach, “believe me capable of authorizing such a step?”

“Good Heavens! child, the supposition was a very natural one! Our position is totally false. Would it not be perfectly right for you to attempt to make it right in the eyes of the world?”

“Ah! what is the world to me! My world is you! If you love me, I care not what other people think of me. I can belong to you no more after we have been before the Mayor than I do to-day, and I do not thank Toussaint for interfering in my matters, or for mentioning my name to you in any way.”

He interrupted her hastily. “I came to see you to-day, Angèle, to tell you that there is trouble in store for us. My mother has heard of you and of this cottage, and I know that she will do her best to separate us.”

“Ah!” she cried, in terror “what can she do? You frighten me —”

He drew the girl toward him, realizing at last how unnecessarily cruel he had been toward her.

"Dearest," he murmured, "do not be troubled. Whatever happens—come what will—my love will be the same. I feel myself capable of any sacrifice for your sake."

In his unconscious egotism he fancied himself quite magnanimous as he uttered these words, and did not suspect that they enlarged Angèle's wound, instead of healing it. He talked on in this strain for some time, interlarding his protestations of resignation and self-abnegation with caresses.

"I know what duty is," he said, with a smile, "although I am a poet, and I can fulfil it, no matter at what cost. My mother may utter whatever threats she chooses; I will not yield. It will be pretty hard though, as she holds the purse-strings, and will seek to reduce the garrison by force. She knows my love of ease, and she thinks me incapable of roughing it, but she will lose her time."

He kissed her hands gayly, and a faint smile curved her pale lips. Far from reassuring her, every word he uttered filled her with consternation, and showed her a desolate future, of which hitherto she had never dreamed. She saw that in his heart, René regarded their love as one of the greatest misfortunes which could come to him.

He did his best to seem gay, courageous and indifferent, and his forced gayety struck her as the merest bravado.

"We shall be miserably poor!" he cried. "Pshaw! we shall learn not to mind it. I shall not be able to give you beautiful toilettes, but then, after all, silks don't make happiness. We must live in the attic and cook our own dinners. When we go into the country on Sundays, it must be third class, and we can carry a basket of provisions to eat on the grass."

His jests had an uncomfortable tone of bitterness, and cut Angèle to the heart; the little nervous laugh with which he enumerated all these prosaic details reminded one of a child, who is trying to make up his mind to swallow some bitter medicine, and whose smile suddenly terminates in bitter loathing.

Angèle, sitting near the window, silent and motionless, listened to the cruel words, which fell, one after the other, on her heart, like the blows of a sacrilegious hammer on a consecrated statue. She felt the keenest anguish, mingled with pity and tenderness. One by one, each illusion took flight, with a melancholy rush of wings, and she saw the ghastly truth in its naked rigidity. This man, whom she adored, would be miserable on her account. This love, which to her was bliss and ecstasy, would be to him a disaster and a fall. She dreamed of him as a God, and she it was, who would dethrone him. She turned her face toward the garden to hide her feelings, and, with her head leaning against the casement, listened to the slow dropping of her tears on the clustering leaves.

"Why do you say nothing?" exclaimed Des Armoises

at last, astonished at her silence. He went to her, took her face in both hands, and turned it round until he could see into her eyes.

"Tears, sweetheart! Do not be troubled. I will arrange things in such a way, that we shall not suffer too unbearably from this disgusting poverty. I will work. I will write rhymes to suit all tastes and all classes. I will besiege the editorial offices, and beleaguer the newspapers, and it will be a strange thing, if we do not conquer fortune."

She rose from her chair. Her resolution was taken, as she swallowed her tears and went to his side. She put her arm around his neck, and pressed her lips to his, in a kiss that was both sad and passionate, while it was long and solemn as an adieu.

"How cold your hands are," he said, with a light shiver, as they touched his cheek.

"I do not feel quite well," she answered. "I got my feet wet in the garden. I will go off to bed early, and you will say good-by now."

He too was feverish and fatigued. His drawn features showed how irksome had been the task he imposed on himself, and he snatched with eager haste at this excuse for cutting short a most painful interview.

"Rest well, dear," he replied, "and do not worry yourself, I will be back to-morrow."

She hesitated.

"No," she murmured, "not to-morrow—it is Saturday, and the house will be all upside down."

"True," he answered, "and besides, I shall be detained in Paris to-morrow—it is my mother's birthday—Monday, then! But if you are not well, you will write to me?"

"Yes, I will write."

They were at the gate of the orchard; over the stone wall clambered the roses, their fragrant cups heavy with rain drops.

"Before you go," she said, "gather some flowers for my vases."

He obeyed, broke off a long branch set thick with buds and blossoms, and handed it to her. She buried her face among them, and then suddenly snatched the poet's hand, and pressed it to her lips.

"Good night!" said des Armoises, passing through the gate.

"Farewell, my beloved!" she murmured in a voice so low that he did not hear it. He was far down the road before she left the gate; when he had passed beyond her sight, she turned and rushed to her little room where she stifled her sobs among the pillows.

Suddenly she started up. She dragged a great trunk into the centre of the room: into this she put all her possessions. She emptied the wardrobe, and the bureau, having made up her mind to depart at once from this house where she had been so happy. In two hours more she might be in Paris, and from thence she would go to some place where René could never find her. She would not accept the sacrifices, which in her

simplicity, she thought him entirely ready to endure for her sake. No one should ever say, that she had marred his life and extinguished his genius.

She found a bitter pleasure in this abnegation, and thought of the reward she should one day receive, when in her obscurity, she should learn of his fame and triumph.

When the trunk was closed, she sent it down stairs by the one servant of the house, who was then commissioned to find a peasant to take it on his wagon to the station.

Angèle, now alone in the house, went through each room, and finally throwing a shawl over her shoulders, and taking the roses in her hand which René had gathered, the girl went out through the orchard. The branches over her head were dripping with rain, which fell like tears upon her.

The sun was setting in great clouds of gold, while above, the sky was dull and gray. Angèle turned once more to look at the dear cottage, the honeysuckles, and the raspberries, the orchard full of flowers and fruit—at all this lost Paradise; then feeling that she could bear it no longer, she tore herself away. The door closed behind her, and slowly she passed through the wood where the nightingales had ceased to sing, with the red roses pressed against her lips to keep back the bitter sobs that choked her.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN ENGAGEMENT.

“**W**HAT on earth does this mean? You here, at this hour!” and Madame Sénéchal looked first at Angèle and then at the trunk, which the concierge had deposited in the anteroom. “Why have you left Vélzy? What has happened?”

“Nothing,” answered her daughter, with a heightened color. “I was lonely there, and I came to find you, that is all.

“And how long do you wish to stay?”

“I do not mean to go back again! Listen, mamma,” she continued, kissing her mother tenderly. “I have been thinking that we ought not to impose ourselves any longer on the hospitality that has been offered us. I am well now, and I ought to go to work. I am losing most precious time at Vélzy, and I want an engagement as soon as possible.”

“As to that, you are right, for your talents ought not to be idle, and grow mouldy in the country. If Monsieur des Armoises loves you, he ought to come forward now and say so. At the same time Art claims you, and you would have no right to throw aside a brilliant future for love of his handsome eyes!”

Angèle tried to smother her mother's words with kisses.

"He will not go to the cottage," she said, with feverish haste, "until Monday, and in the meantime it is unnecessary that he should know my resolution. Now let us go to bed, for I am dead with sleep."

She put her roses in water, and shut herself into her little room, where she could weep her heart out, unmolested. She determined to seek, the very next day, an engagement which would take her far from Paris; this was all she would ask. She fancied it would not be difficult to do this, as at the Salle Corneille, she often heard of agencies which existed for the especial purpose of sending actors and actresses to the provinces.

In the morning Angèle breakfasted in silence by the side of her mother, who had not yet recovered from her astonishment, then she started forth on her mission. She did not care to go near Saint Felix, nor La Genevairaie, who were both in the habit of seeing René constantly, as she wished to keep him in ignorance of her movements. She crossed the Luxembourg. Once on the Boulevard Saint Michel she entered an omnibus and went in it as far as the Porte Saint Martin. In this theatrical quarter, are gathered most of the industries connected with dramatic Art, and she thought that here she should find what she wanted, or be told where to go to make application.

As she walked slowly and sadly along, she felt a hand on her arm. Starting and looking up, she recognized a girl she had known at the Salle Corneille—Mademoiselle Sabine, who exclaimed:

"It is an age since I saw you! What on earth have you been doing, and where have you kept yourself?"

In a very few words, Angèle replied to these questions, and told her what she now wanted.

"All right," said the good-natured Sabine. "I am on my way to the Agency now. Come with me, Massador will find precisely what you want."

She led the way to La Rue Sancry, and they entered a very filthy-looking courtyard; crossing it by an alley that smelt very badly, they reached a muddy staircase, up which the two girls gingerly picked their way. On the third floor they saw a placard:

"MASSADOR—THEATRICAL AGENCY."

"This is the place!" cried Sabine, and unceremoniously pushing open the door, she introduced her friend to a long, narrow room—an anteroom, where a thin, old man, buttoned up to the chin in a loose overcoat, was cleaning a lamp.

"Good-morning, Alexis," cried Mademoiselle Sabine, who had the air of being thoroughly at home. "Is Massador visible?"

The man lifted his bald head, and answered in a timid tone, as he sought to pull his very short sleeves over his immense red hands:

"Monsieur Massador is in conference with an artist, at the present moment; but would the ladies kindly go on to the reception room? They would find a good many persons there."

There were, indeed, many persons there, and a most motley crowd it was, too. Angèle, who for so many weeks, had seen nothing of actors, who—say what one pleases, are really a class by themselves—felt a vague discomfort and almost shock, at this interior—so suggestive of the shifts and poverty of dramatic Bohemianism.

The walls of the room were covered with dirty, gray paper, and hung thick with photographs of men, of women, and of prodigal sons, in the costumes of their principal parts, inscribed under each with words of fulsome praise to their dear friend Massador. The furniture consisted of hair-cloth chairs, of an oak desk, and book-shelves, on which were huge volumes, bound in green; these letters, printed on a white slip, pasted on their backs:

*“First parts—Fathers—Young man of fashion—
Tenors, &c.”*

Seated on one of the chairs, with his feet drawn up to the highest rounds, with his elbows nearly even with his chin, sat a man with a most dismal air, listening to the energetic words of a saucy little woman, with close-cut hair, who affected masculine ways of speech and of gesture.

On the other side of the room, sat a middle-aged woman, showily dressed in light green silk, to whom a man was exhibiting the contents of a basket of perfumery, soaps and similar articles for the toilette.

Massador's clients looked at the new arrivals for a moment, then the young man with the perfumery went on with his gabble, and the dismal youth shook his head reprovingly, at the short-haired young woman, who, as Angèle entered the room, seated herself on the table and swung her feet ostentatiously.

"How wild you are, Héloïse!" said the vender of small wares.

"You are a perfect bore, Catala," answered Héloïse, "with your airs of propriety."

The person whom she called Catala, now turned to the lady in the green dress, with renewed offers of cold cream and of pearl powder.

"I never use them, sir," she said.

"When did you give them up?" asked Héloïse, impertinently.

"I never use them, sir," the woman replied, coldly.

"I believe you. You preferred yellow," and Héloïse shrieked with laughter at her own rude witticism.

"Laugh on! laugh on!" answered her opponent, with grim forbearance. It will be a long time before you enjoy the success I had in Russia."

"Ah! in Russia!" cried Catala, opening his eyes with an affected air of surprise, and passing a white-beringed hand through his greasy curls. "Russia is the country for artists like ourselves!" And he began to empty his basket at the feet of the lady, declaiming as he did so, in the tone of an exhibitor of a magic lantern: "Who buys! who buys! Black, white and red! Let all take

their choice! Who buys! who buys! Let all who want rosy nails, white hands and black lashes, come to me, for I have them all here and at their service! You have only to choose! Young and old, brunettes and blondes, all have need of Catala!"

These shrill tones rang through the room, and the man was droll, and his accent so absurdly grotesque, with its strong Southern twang, that Angèle, although little inclined to laugh, was obliged to smile. All she saw and heard, inspired her with the greatest possible repugnance. Once, even, she started to leave, but her companions held her back, telling her that the man she wanted to see, would be there presently. She seated herself again, with sad resignation, and relapsed into thought. Soon she was far away from this dingy room and among the honeysuckles and roses of that little cottage at Vélzy, where, only the evening before, she had been living in such sweet content.

What a contrast between the fresh, delicious atmosphere of those odorous woods and this place, the haunt of second-rate actors! How disgusted René would be at the companionship she had wilfully sought! Tears rushed to her eyes, as she thought over all the events of the past six months, and then she went further back to her childhood. She thought of herself as a child, seated in one of those cushioned chairs in that hall which served as a theatre in the little town of Bay. She remembered how she had held her breath, in admiring awe, as she watched these actors, who were as so many kings in her

eyes, and who differed in no degree from these miserable, shabby-looking fellows, whom she now saw arguing and disputing in her presence, the mingled odors of tobacco and onions about their clothing sickening and disgusting her.

Meanwhile Catala had grown tired of talking. Leaving his wares at the feet of the unmoved lady in green, he wiped his brow and declared that a little beer would not come amiss.

"Will these ladies have some?" he asked, with an ingratiating bow to Angèle and Sabine, who thanked him, but declined his obliging offer.

"Let them alone," said Héloïse, in a loud whisper. "They are putting on great airs of style, but they mean to deprive us of our bread, all the same."

Angèle colored, and, to her great joy, Massador at that moment appeared, escorting a young girl, whose sentimental air and affected, gliding step excited a universal sniff of derision.

Massador showed her through the room, opened the opposite door, and then came back, with the manner of a man overwhelmed with business. He was a man of fifty, pale, but stout. His scanty, sleek, yellow hair made him look like a canary just coming out of its bath. His dress was rigidly correct, as an impressario, in black. His low-cut vest showed a shirt front, which, however, was not immaculate, as two or three spots of coffee tarnished its whiteness.

He was soon surrounded.

"Massador!" cried one, "Have you nothing for me?"

"Massador! I am first on your list."

"Massador! When shall I sign this engagement?"

"Have patience, my children," he said, with a majestic gesture. "I must just say a word to these ladies."

And he advanced gallantly toward Angèle and her companion.

"Precisely!" cried Catala, bowing profoundly. "Beauty before merit!"

Massador begged the two young women to resume their seats, and, bringing up a chair, planted it in front of them, saying to Mademoiselle Sabine, as he did so:

"Your little affair is prosperously concluded. You will go to Tours to sing in Opera Bouffe. Your salary will not be large, but it is better than nothing."

Then, turning to Angèle, he asked:

"And what can I do for you, my child?"

"My friend is one of the pupils of a man who turns out only artists," said Sabine, authoritatively—"of Saint Felix, I mean." And then, seeing that Angèle was confused and did not know what to say, she went on to explain, that Mademoiselle Sénéchal wished to make her débüt in the provinces.

"Ah! indeed! Mademoiselle is a new recruit, then? And a pretty one, too! Charming! Most charming!" And the impressario smiled insinuatingly.

"Now, just look at that, Héloïse," muttered Catala.

"There is an example of the influence of dress on the human heart. Massador is wonderfully gracious to the blue-eyed lady. Do you know her?"

"No. What do you think she plays? I bet she wants the part of a Fairy Queen in a pantomime."

"No! no! she aims higher than that. Look at her dress. It is silk, my dear, and good silk, too," added Catala.

"It is always the way," answered Héloïse, in a loud, clear voice. "Massador never takes notice of women who are not well dressed! If I had plenty to eat and drink and fine clothes to wear, I would not try and take the bread out of other persons' mouths!" And she eyed Angèle angrily.

Angèle heard, and the color rushed to her cheeks. As to Massador, he turned a deaf ear, and continued his compliments.

"Which do you prefer, Tragedy or Comedy? With your pretty face, you ought to please the public. I have a good thing for you, but unfortunately it is out of Paris."

"Which would suit me perfectly," answered Angèle. "I am ready to go anywhere."

"Then come into my office, and we will sign an engagement."

He led the way to his private room, and taking up his pen, he said:

"You will go to Liège. Your salary will be three hundred francs per month, and yours will be the

first rôle in the company. It is a magnificent position, although there may be a little too much tobacco smoke for you at first. I hope your voice is a very powerful one, for it will take good lungs to be heard above the rattle of glasses and the buzz of conversation."

"Do you mean that it is not a theatre?" asked Angèle, somewhat startled.

"It is not a theatre, exactly—it is a new combination—a place where the public can obtain food for the body, and food for the mind at the same time—and it promises to be a paying enterprise."

Angèle's head drooped, and tears filled her eyes. To have dreamed of the Théâtre Français, and then to fall to a Café Concert. But she wished to leave Paris, and there was no other path open to her. She signed the engagement.

"You will thank me later," said Massador, gallantly kissing her hand. "There is no time to lose. They are very impatient to open their house, and you must make all your preparations without the slightest delay."

They returned to the waiting-room, where Massador instantly fell a victim to the lady in green. Héloïse, still swinging her heels on the table, was eating cherries, and throwing the stones all round the room; her companion looked more dreary than ever.

Catala went to meet Mademoiselle Sabine.

"Have you signed your engagement?" he asked. "Good luck to you, then. Find me some customers at

Tours, will you? You know that I can send my goods by mail, and I will send you a little package gratis." Then bending very low before Angèle, he murmured:

"Duchess! Your humble servant," and he opened the door into the anteroom, where the old man had finished the cleaning of his lamp, and was now absorbed in an old book.

When they were in the street Angèle stopped to read the terms of her engagement again.

"How queer!" exclaimed Mademoiselle Sabine.

"Yes," answered the poor girl, "it is queer, but more sad than queer."

CHAPTER XIV.

AWAKENING.

MONDAY morning the bright sun woke René des Armoises. He rose and dressed slowly, with rather a sinking of the heart, as he remembered that he had promised to go to Vélzy that day. His letters came just as he was ready to go. He took one up carelessly, but suddenly recognizing the writing, he tore it open—and read as follows:

SUNDAY EVENING.

“DEARLY BELOVED:—I signed an engagement yesterday, which will take me far away, and I go immediately, but not before I write you these few lines of farewell. Be assured that while I disappear thus voluntarily out of your life, you continue to be the soul of mine. I leave you suddenly, but with no feeling of bitterness or resentment in my heart—no—I carry away with me only the most loving recollection of you and your goodness. The dear moments I owe to you. Those happy days at Vélzy, I can never forget. I shall bless them until my lips are cold in death, but I have thought over our last conversation, and have begun to realize how much you will be compelled to sacrifice on my account, and I cannot allow it. You must run no such risks.

"I wish you, my beloved — my poet, to become the great artist of which we have dreamed. To do this, no prosaic necessities, no sordid cares must harass your mind. You must have time to dream, to work, and to compose. I wish you all sorts of triumphs and happiness, success and glory. You know that I am very ambitious for you.

"Have no uneasiness on my account. I am young and brave, and I shall get on. Fortune will come to my assistance, I am sure.

"Adieu. I take with me the roses you gathered for me at Vélzy — they have not yet lost their sweetness, my beloved! Let me call you this again — my beloved! Farewell. I love you, and I leave you — but your memory will be enshrined within my heart. In return, think sometimes of your poor little Angèle."

René's lips quivered, and he felt a pang of remorse. He rushed down the stairs, and in less than two hours he stood before the door of the cottage, at Vélzy. The doors and windows were wide open, and a great brushing and dusting was going on under the supervision of Madame Sénéchal, who with her sleeves rolled up also lent a helping hand.

On René's appearance she smoothes her hair quickly, and assumed a most dignified air.

"Where is Angèle?" cried René, impetuously. "Why did you let her go?"

"Where she is, I shall not tell you," answered the good lady, compressing her lips. "As to your second


question, you will excuse me, if I say that it is really very foolish. Angèle is old enough to do what she pleases, and she has only exercised the right which I am perfectly willing to concede to her! But were we to go to the bottom of things, we should find out, I fancy, that it is not I who should be reproached for her departure."

"Do you mean that she is gone for good?" asked Des Armoises, in considerable agitation.

"Yes, she is gone for good, and if we talk about it steadily for the next twenty-four hours," said Madame Sénéchal, wiping away the tears, "it won't alter the facts nor bring her back! She has gone away, poor child! because she was not appreciated here. To tell the truth, they were jealous of her talent. People thought when she made her débüt, that there would be a revolution in Art,—they were afraid of her. Therefore, I understand it all. Now that it is too late, the Parisians will realize that they have bitten off their own noses."

"Where is she? I must know."

"Well! you will not know then, for Angèle made me swear not to tell you. She was right to go, my daughter is a good girl, she was not willing to accept a hospitality which she knew was compromising her name and her future. This is enough! You understand, and now have the goodness to tell me, to whom I shall give the keys when I have finished putting this cottage in order?"



René then changed his tone: he became very humble, and almost knelt at the knees of the old lady, to implore her to tell him where Angèle had fled, but Madame Sénéchal was immovable. Before going, Angèle had made her swear solemnly to keep her secret, and not to give to a human being, not even Joseph, the name of the town to which she was going. She was firm, and Des Armoises returned to Paris, as ignorant as he left it.

He went to find Joseph at once, whom he hoped to find less mysterious, but the astonishment of his friend was too sincere to be mistaken.

Toussaint knew no more than he did himself, and René entered the presence of his mother in bitter despair. Madame des Armoises at once saw that some great crisis had taken place which probably was the work of La Genevraie. She had little difficulty, as reticence was by no means one of the qualities of the young man, in making him give an account of Angèle's abrupt departure. René, in fact, was impatient to speak, and he assailed his mother with the bitterest reproaches, although he had little idea how well home they struck; he builded better than he knew, in fact, when he told her that she was the indirect cause of what had happened. She, like the wise woman she was, allowed him to talk in this way for several days in succession, listened to him with an air of commiseration and sympathy; then, one morning, seeing him more restless and agitated than usual, she ventured to speak to him.

"My dear son," she said, "here is a card from the Manager, requesting you to call in regard to the rehearsals."

René threw the card carelessly on his desk, and stood moodily looking from the window.

"It is foolish," she said quietly, "to give way thus. I, of course, understand your grief, and respect it to a certain extent, although it is caused by a person who does not deserve your love."

He turned quickly and looked at his mother with an air of intense irritation.

"I mean what I say," she continued gravely. "If this woman went away in this abrupt fashion, it certainly proves that her affection for you, was not very deep."

She went out, having let fly this first arrow, slender and sharp as a needle. She left it quivering in the flesh, ready to do its appointed task. René walked up and down his room and then hastily left the house, and went to the Theatre, where he soon became interested in a scene that hung fire. He worked over it all day and then brought it home, astonished to find that his personal sorrows, losses and grievances, were lost in those of his heroes — that the bringing out of his characters — the smoothness of his versification, the eager search for word or phrase which should most aptly express his meaning, had absorbed his thoughts all day.

His mother came into his study.

"I am going to Madame Boissimon's," she said. "I promised her that you would go with me, but I leave you to the indulgence of your grief. There will be a great many people there, and the story of this foolish affair, has in some way got noised about; your melancholy face will be noticed, and people will talk; and as it is not worth while to make yourself food for their gossip, I think you had best stay at home."

This was quite enough to induce René to go out. He was keenly susceptible to ridicule. The fear of passing for a languishing Werther surmounted his reluctance, and he exclaimed as he threw off his dressing jacket:

"Wait for me! I will go with you."

Madame Boissimon's Wednesdays were very brilliant. Her husband's high position in the Emperor's household, brought under her roof a host of celebrities, —men of letters and women of the world. Madame des Armoises manœuvred so well, that about the middle of the evening René was induced to recite some fragments of the drama which was soon to be produced.

As much through bravado as through vanity, he threw himself with enthusiasm into this recitation, and his voice and intonation added fire to the sparkling verses. He was applauded, surrounded and caressed; Mademoiselle alone affected an utter indifference, which ended by piquing René. This young girl possessed the sang froid and experience of a coquette of thirty. She knew that in many respects poets and women are much

alike, and that the best way to subjugate them is to evince the most utter indifference toward them.

While she feigned therefore not to notice René, she managed to be seated always within range of his vision, and with a thousand graceful, undulating movements of her pretty throat, and handsome head, crowned by blonde braids, she talked to her friends gayly and unconsciously. This succeeded. The poet, considerably amazed to find that she was perfectly uninterested in the display of his talents, finally accorded to Marthe an attention which hitherto he had never condescended to show her.

The next day he turned his steps to La Rue des Rennes, to ask if Madame Sénéchal had heard any news from Angèle, but when he reached the house he hesitated, and asked himself what sort of a figure he should make if he lost his temper in talking to the old lady, and turned abruptly on his heel, and went to the Theatre. From this day forth he resumed all the habits which he had abandoned in early spring.

It was like the gradual creeping up of the tide on the beach. The submersion of his love was slowly but surely accomplished, until all had disappeared under the smooth surface of the deep sea.

René asked his mother several questions in regard to Marthe, and Madame des Armoises had a good deal to say of the girl's beauty, as well as of the influence of her father.

Monsieur de Boissimon was much in favor at the

Tuilleries, since the Plebiscite of May, 1870, had given to the Empire a slight return of former popularity. He was spoken of as a future Minister. Any man of letters, it was said, who should become his son-in-law, would find an easy path to glory. Every stage would quarrel for the presentation of his pieces, and at the time we write, the stage alone put money in the pockets of literary men.

Again did La Genevaire, prompted by Madame des Armoises, appear on the scene. He urged René to ask for Marthe de Boissimon's hand, in due form and at once. The young man fought shy for a time. He was disinclined to matrimony, he said, and thought himself too young to put his head in the noose.

"Come! come!" cried La Genevaire, "marriage is nowadays a very elastic chain—it can be shortened or lengthened *ad libitum*. You will go far, my boy, before you can find so pretty a creature as Marthe, or a father-in-law with the influence of Boissimon. For heaven's sake, do not waste any time now, but bestir yourself!"

"I am not only reluctant to marry," said the poet, "but I feel certain scruples in regard to Angèle. If she were to have a child, it would be my duty to adopt it; and how would this duty fit in with these others, which you are now begging me to assume?"

"Nonsense!" cried Mephistophiles. "Your Ariadne is undoubtedly consoling herself with some Theseus of the boards. Do not be childish, and cease

to handle the affairs of life timidly and with gloved hands! Grasp them boldly, and let the thorns do their worst!"

And the tempter departed, with these words, leaving René in a fit of rage, at the mere idea of having been trifled with. Then came his mother, with her solicitations and arguments, and finally, in utter weariness of flesh and spirits, he said yes. As soon as Madame des Armoises had obtained this consent from her son, she took speedy measures, for she was of the opinion, that marriages, like certain delicate dishes, should not be allowed time to cool. The demand was made at once, and Mademoiselle Marthe, much flattered by being the choice of this handsome poet, was quite ready to give her consent. Her father, who had no dowry to give her, and who was somewhat anxious in regard to her future, eagerly agreed. All the necessary steps were taken with all possible speed, and one day, Joseph Toussaint received a printed letter, announcing the marriage of Xavier-René des Armoises and of Mademoiselle Marthe de Boissimon, with an invitation to L'Eglise Saint-Roch, where the ceremony would be performed, by his Eminence, the Cardinal.

The poor fellow could not believe his eyes, and a ringing oath, quite befitting a cavalry officer, fell from his pacific lips.

The very day of the celebration of the marriage at the Mayoralty, the news of the declaration of the war with Prussia, was spread throughout Paris. We all

remember, with what blind and reckless enthusiasm this terrible announcement was received. The whole Parisian populace seemed to have lost their heads, and to be absolutely intoxicated with drunken, unreasoning joy.

The *Rhin Allemand* was played at the theatres. At the concerts, on the Champs Elysées, they played a march, called the "Entree à Berlin." Several journals published, with great flourish of trumpets, an ode, signed René des Armoises, which bristled with threats and belligerent sentences.

Even the peaceful Senator, whose discourses Tous-saint prepared, was seized with martial fire. He meditated a pamphlet, on the annexation of the Rhenish provinces, and Joseph threw away his time, when he tried to open his eyes.

"You know nothing of these Germans," said the young man. "I have seen much of them, and have studied them thoroughly. I know that they hate us. For thirty years, they have been jealous of us, and have been, with the slow perseverance — which is a part of their character — making their preparations to attack us. German thunder, as Henri Heine says, moves slowly, but when it does burst, it is terrible! Alas!" added Joseph, thinking of his home at Albestroft, "who can say what will become of my little nest?"

Amid this chorus of frivolous bravados and senseless songs of victory, came the news of the defeat of Wessembourg, sounding over the land like a dismal

tocsin of warning. It was invasion! Unwilling as the French were to believe it, they were forced to recognize the truth. They had so long rocked themselves with the idea of a triumphal march into Berlin, that they lived in constant expectation, from hour to hour, of the intelligence of some glorious battle. The wisest heads were turned, and the deceived masses perceived on the horizon, the mirage of victory.

On the afternoon of the 6th of August, the rumor spread that there had been indeed a battle, and a decisive victory. The windows and balconies blazed with color—an immense crowd filled the Boulevard des Italiens, singing and roaring like a tumultuous sea. All Paris was radiant; every face was smiling, and every hand met its neighbor's in cordial and mutual congratulation.

Two artists, from the opera, standing in an open carriage, started the Marsellaise, which was caught up and repeated by thousands of enthusiastic voices.

A golden sun, shining through rifts of heavy clouds, streamed at times over the tri-colored flags, floating from the windows, above the heads of this multitude.

A sudden rush in the crowd, bore Toussaint along, and he found himself at the side of René des Armoises, who was gesticulating and talking. Joseph tried to avoid him, but the poet snatched his arm.

"Well, my boy," he cried, "what do you say to this? We have trapped our German wolves! Twenty-five thousand men and the Royal Prince, prisoners of war. Heavens! what a revenge!"

"Are you sure?" murmured Joseph.

"Sure! I have the intelligence from my father-in-law, who had just heard it at the War Office."

The crowd separated the friends. The poet waved his hat in the air, and the wind blowing his hair about his head, he sang at the top of his voice :

*"Amour sacré de la patrie,
Conduis, soutiens, nos bras vengeurs !"*

He looked very handsome, and Joseph involuntarily thought of the first day, when they shook hands on the Plain, at Bay. He looked up at the sky, which, directly overhead, was black with clouds, and, notwithstanding the exuberant joy about him, and the wild acclamations, he felt his throat contract with a choking sob.

The revulsion was not long in coming. The very next morning, the same couriers brought the intelligence of two bloody defeats. Each day now brought its melancholy tale of woe, of deceptions and despair. There were Gravelotte and Sainte-Prirat—the flight of the Emperor toward Châlons—the mad and useless march across the Argonnes—then Beaumont, then the disaster of Sedan.

Joseph was heart-broken. He wished to do something, and he was one of the first to enrol himself in the National Guard. He who had never in his life shouldered a gun, was now drilled every morning with his companions, in the Luxembourg. He had seen René once again, the evening of September 4th. That

morning, the news had come of the capitulation of Sedan, and Joseph was returning to his lodgings at night, having been on duty all day with his battalion, when he met René, who was rushing along with hasty step and unseeing eye.

"It is all over!" said Toussaint, "the Republic is proclaimed!"

"Yes!" cried René, "and a beautiful piece of work it is! In a week," he added, furiously, "the Prussians will be in Paris."

"Paris will defend itself," said Toussaint. "The enemy will find the gates closed, and the cannon on the ramparts."

"A siege then? That would be indeed the finishing touch. When the Parisians find themselves deprived of their fresh fish for a week, they will rebel and open the gates themselves! There will be foes within, as well as without! You do not know the populace.

"Animal aux cent têtes frivoles."

"France is a ruined country. Adieu to Art, to Mind, and to Beauty! But I shall not wait for the pitiful *dénouement*. In three days, I shall shake the dust of this city from my feet."

As to myself," answered Joseph, "I love Paris more than ever, since these dark days have come. I feel as mothers feel, who love their children best when they are ill."

"You stay here, then?"

"Most assuredly!"

"Good luck to you, then!" cried Des Armoises.
"You will have a sweet time of it!"

"I shall do my duty," answered Toussaint, simply, with a severe look of reproach, from the eyes which were usually so gentle.

The poet was somewhat abashed.

"There is nothing for me to do here," he murmured.
"I am not needed. Besides, did I wish to remain, I could not. The fall of the Empire has ruined my father-in-law. He is half crazy. My mother and my wife are equally so; they think of nothing but flight, and I cannot, with decency, abandon them. To-morrow, or the day after, we shall be at Brussels. Au revoir, Joseph; may we meet soon under fairer skies."

"Farewell!" said Toussaint, sadly.

Two days later, René, with his wife, his mother, his wife's parents, and a mountain of luggage, set out for Belgium. On the road, their train passed another, going toward Paris. This was crowded with young men and women — artists, who had been surprised by the war, amid their wanderings of pleasure and of study. They had loved Paris in its days of prosperity, and they did not choose to remain away, when adversity had overtaken it.

They returned, therefore, to aid in its defence, and to love it in its poverty and destitution, and to eat the black bread of the Siege.

CHAPTER XV.

DESOLATION.

BETWEEN the Luxembourg and the Avenue de l'Observatoire, some days after the investment, a company of the National Guard were being drilled. This company was made up of professors, artists and shopkeepers. In vain did these various physiognomies try to assume a military air.

"Attention!" cried the Sergeant, in a tone of command. "Shoulder arms! Number five! what are you doing with your left hand? Keep your feet in line! You move like a clown——"

The unfortunate number five, to whom this objur-gation was addressed, was none other than Joseph Toussaint, who, with kepi too far back on his head, had as little of a martial air as can well be imagined. He was paying very little attention to the Sergeant's words, for he was watching a woman, whose dark dress he had seen gliding among the trees of the avenue.

"How like Angèle!" he said to himself.

He longed to throw down his musket, and rush in pursuit, but discipline before all! He dared not take his eyes from this figure, however, lest he should lose all trace of her again. Fortunately, the Sergeant gave the order to stack arms and rest for fifteen minutes;

and Toussaint darted off after the dark figure, passed her, turned, and looked in her face.

"Yes! it is you!" he said, joyfully. "I was sure that I was not mistaken!"

"My dear friend!" answered Angèle, extending her hand. Then, looking at him from head to foot, said, with an irrepressible smile: "How odd you look in that costume! I never should have known you."

She too was changed. Her cheeks were hollow and she had lost her color. She shivered in the keen air, and wrapped a thin shawl more closely round her shoulders.

"Why did you come back here?" asked Toussaint.

"I could not leave my mother alone. I should have been in constant anxiety about her. At least, we can be together, and so endure better whatever happens. Poor Paris!" she added, with a long sigh.

"You may well say 'Poor Paris!' Terrible things have happened since——"

Joseph checked himself. Angèle's very lips turned pale, but she said calmly:

"Since those dear days at Vélzy you mean, I presume. When I think of those terrible Prussians quartered in that cottage where I was so happy, my very heart bleeds."

"Des Arnoises has gone?" said Joseph, with bitter sarcasm, of which he was fully conscious presently and deeply repentant. "He has found a place of safety—with his—with his family."

Angèle turned away her head.

"My instinct did not deceive me. He is a thoroughly selfish fellow," he continued.

She wheeled round and caught his arm.

"Do not say an unkind word of René. I will not endure it!" she cried, passionately.

"You love him still!" exclaimed Joseph, in astonishment.

"Always and forever! You must not judge René by the rest of the world. True poets are a race by themselves!"

"Yes," interrupted Joseph, coldly, "a race whose brains have taken the place of their hearts!"

"They are precisely what they were intended to be," continued Angèle, excitedly; "and the women whom they have loved must content themselves with knowing that, even for a brief period, they have occupied their lives. Besides," she continued, as if she wished to find an excuse with which to justify René in her own eyes, "if things have turned out as they have, it is because I wished it. It is not he whom you should blame. As for myself, I shall always be grateful to him. What was I before I knew him? An ignorant little rustic! His love has transformed me. At Liège, it was the recollection of this love which enabled me to endure these weary months of exile —"

"Then you were sad at times, and lonely?" asked Joseph, desirous to change the conversation.

"Of course. Things were not altogether couleur de

And then, impelled by her natural expansiveness, she went on to describe her débüt. The establishment where she was engaged was a regular Café Concert, where two performances took place daily, and she never was released until midnight, when she crawled to her bed, utterly worn out. The other women of the *troupe* were jealous of her beauty, and did their best to add to the difficulties of her life. Then her toilettes were too simple, and the Manager reproached her violently for this, and let her understand that he considered her absurdly virtuous.

"Nevertheless," she continued, "there were some amusing hours in this Bohemian life. In the morning, when we were all together, sewing on our dresses, we read to each other the *billet doux* we had received. Ah! they were delicious!"

It was easy to see that the frivolous side of her nature had been developed in the unscrupulous companionship by which she had been surrounded. She had kept up her light and smiling way of looking at things, and yet the light lines at the corners of her lips, and the shadows under her eyes told Joseph that many a night had been passed in tears.

The drum beat and Toussaint started.

"I must go," said the young man, as he pressed her hand.

"Come and see us in our new home," she urged.

He went the very next day. Madame Sénéchal had left the apartment in La Rue de Rennes. It had

become too expensive for her slender resources. The room she occupied now — Rue de Dragon on the Court — consisted of a dark closet—which did duty as a kitchen—of a dining-room, where Madame Sénéchal's bed, in an alcove, was shrouded by curtains, and by a salôn, where Angèle slept. Here were assembled all that was left of the furniture in La Rue de Savonnaires. Above a plaster figure of the Venus of Milo was a great bunch of withered roses, hung, like a relic, against the wall.

In a vase on the mantel shelf was a pack of cards, often consulted, for neither Angèle nor her mother had lost faith in them.

When Joseph entered, Angèle was taking her chocolate, carefully served by Madame Sénéchal, in their only cup of old Japanese, and with their one solid silver spoon, both reserved for the sole use of her daughter.

"You surprise me," said Angèle, "in one of my rare and brief moments of magnificence. I adore my breakfast. I fancy myself rolling in wealth. Have I not old china and silver? What more do I need?" She laughed, and then said quite seriously :

"Dear Mamma, please lay aside those pink papers on the commode, they destroy the illusion! Well they might, since these rose-colored papers were the pawnbroker's tickets!"

Madame Sénéchal's careworn countenance showed Joseph very clearly that things were going hard with her. He understood this, however, more fully when he

again became a daily visitor in this humble interior, and was quickly initiated into the daily battles fought by the poor mother to ensure her daughter the bread she put into her mouth. The two women lived by their needle, and since the siege had begun they found little work, and that very poorly paid.

When the Government organized the equipment of the National Guard, they obtained some occupation. Sewing was given out, and they earned by very hard labor a few sous each day.

Occasionally too, Angèle, through the Massador agency, got a chance to recite some patriotic verses before an audience of soldiers. Her recompense was small enough, so far as money went, but Angèle enjoyed the salvos of applause. One evening the enthusiastic audience presented her with a rabbit decked with ribbons, which she bore with a gay laugh of triumph, home to her mother.

At this time, a rabbit was not a present to be disdained, and Madame Sénéchal welcomed the gift with much thanksgiving, and contrived to make it last three days. But the two poor women found it hard to live, and their debts accumulated. When at last, one of their creditors became impatient, Madame Sénéchal rose one morning and looked over everything she owned, and carried off to the pawnbroker's a half forgotten treasure in the shape of a pair of plated candlesticks. She paid her debt, and brought back to Angèle some dainty for her breakfast.

Her daughter, accustomed to her mother's ways, asked no questions, but easily dreamed what had been done. She looked at the drawer from which the candlesticks had been taken, and said with a sigh: "And what are we to do when nothing is left?"

"Nothing! Why, my dear child," her mother would answer seriously, "how can you talk in that way when we have your talent to fall back upon?"

Joseph saw much of their poverty and of their cheerfulness, and he tried to assist them in many ways.

His senator had not left Paris. Although he had no more speeches to write, he retained Toussaint in his service, both because he was fond of him, and because he needed some companionship in these dark and dreary days. Whenever the young man could get away from the duties he owed his patron and from the ramparts, he would hasten to Madame Sénéchal's, bringing with him each time, one of those tin cans which played so large a part during the siege. Under pretext that the restaurants were unendurable, he asked to be allowed to dine with these two women, and was thus enabled to compel Madame Sénéchal to accept some money from him.

He said his room was too small to hold both his books and his wood, and he ordered the wood sent to the Rue du Dragon. He spent his evenings there, and after a frugal supper of horse flesh, and rice, they gathered round a bright fire in Angèle's room, and as he saw the faces of mother and daughter slightly flush

in the delicious warmth, he would rub his head and exclaim :

"I do love winter! I love to hear the wind howl round the windows. I love to hear that crackling sound of the wood blazing, and when I am here, I forget the ramparts, the National Guard and the Prussians bivouacked around Paris. It seems to me that we are again at Bay, and that in one moment we shall hear the bell ring for nine o'clock."

Madame Sénéchal smiled; Angèle sighed as she sewed the coarse heavy work she held on her knees. She was not the dupe of any of the pretexts invented by Toussaint, but she was neither humiliated nor confused by these alms. Her thoughts were elsewhere, and her life was retrospective. She lived in the Past, and the terrible incidents of the siege hardly awakened her attention. She knew that the time was approaching when she must confide a secret to her mother, which would crush her to the earth.

In November, Joseph was so much occupied with his military duties that he was rarely seen at the Sénéchals'. This was the time selected by Angèle, to reveal her miserable story to her kind and indulgent mother.

The rain dashed against the windows of the room where the two women sat completing the day's appointed task, and then it was that Angèle, in a low quivering voice made her disclosure. It was a thunder stroke to Madame Sénéchal, who had always placed the most absolute confidence in her daughter, and was deeply wounded in her dignity and her pride.

She seized Angèle by the arm, and pushed her into the next room, and then burst into wild tears and sobs, mingled with maledictions against René des Armoises.

Angèle sat in the darkness and cold of the dining-room, with her head leaning against the wall, and when she could bear it no longer, she opened the door into the corridor, but her mother heard her, and rushed like a whirlwind from the *salon*.

"What are you going to do?" she exclaimed, snatching her daughter's hand. "Do you wish to find that wretch who has deserted you?"

"No mamma," answered Angèle drearily. "But now that you throw me off, what is there save the Seine left to me?"

She said this in such a heartbroken tone that her mother caught her in her arms, and the two women mingled their tears. Finally as the night wore on, both grew calmer, and the mother took it on herself to console the daughter. "Her poor little bird, her Angèle."

By degrees she began to look on the coming of Angèle's child, not only without aversion, but with impatience.

"We were so alone in the world!" she said, "and now we shall have a man to protect us."

To hear Madame Sénéchal talk, one would have supposed the boy to be at least ten years old. She began to get together tiny stockings, and an embroidered apron or two, but she forgot the essentials, flannels and linen.

Thus November and December wore away, Joseph in the meantime living the rough life of a soldier. On the 31st of December, he brought as a New Year's gift, a half dozen huge potatoes that they cooked in the ashes.

Then came the worst days of the siege, the time that they were all glad to get bread made of the husks of oats, days without a fire, and nights disturbed by the incessant bombardment. The streets, of course, were unlighted at night and wretched by day, but the women found some little comfort in looking forward to the coming of the baby.

"Ah! mamma," said Angèle, "every thing we see in him that is like me, we must eradicate. He must be a great artist like his father."

"He had better be an honest man!" Madame Sénéchal answered sharply.

Sometimes as the girl sat alone in her cold and comfortless room, listening to the incessant rattling of musketry, the beating of drums, and the bugle's clarion call, the fear of the Future would bring a cloud to her brow. The debilitating life of the siege, the want of exercise and nourishing food, the terrors of the bombardment affected both health and spirits. She had a dry hard cough, and her strength seemed to have fled.

"How do I dare to rejoice in the birth of my child? Will he not have the right to reproach me? May I not die before I can bring him up?"

Then there came a moment's cessation of the firing,

the drums ceased to beat, the sun came out,—a sparrow twittered on the window sill, and Angèle's heart grew lighter; the Hope which was a part of her nature, once more regained its ascendancy.

“God,” she said to herself, “will pardon my errors if I try to do my duty toward my child. He will give me strength and courage to bring him up as I ought. Better days are in store for us!”

CHAPTER XVI.

FRANCO-PRUSSIAN.

"**A**T four o'clock," cried the Lieutenant, "every man is to be on the Quai, with his arms and his baggage; not a button is to be left behind!"

It was at Courbevoie, on the morning of the 19th of February, that the Lieutenant, lantern in hand, stood on the threshold of a room occupied by Toussaint and his comrades, in a deserted house, at Courbevoie, and issued this peremptory order.

"I wish a man could rest one minute in peace!" grumbled a young fellow with a blonde moustache. "I must say, that I prefer the days of the Empire, myself!"

"It seems that we are to do some desperate deed anon!" said an artist, as he rolled up his blanket and tightened the strap, and he lightly hummed a fragment of an old song.

Mon capitaine est mort,
Et moi je vis encore;
Demain, au point du jour,
Ce sera mon tour.

Joseph, very grave and a little nervous, buttoned his long, bottle-green coat and buckled his belt. He realized that something serious was near at hand. For

three days, there had been a vague murmur of a supreme effort, and the newspapers went so far as to talk of a sortie, in a body. Toussaint had been, therefore, to the S^{én}échals to take leave of them, but said not a word of his visit being one of farewell, or of the rumors in circulation.

"To-day," he said to himself, "I shall be under fire for the first time. I wonder how I shall stand it! As well as the others, I suppose."

He followed his companions. The night was dark and wet. The battalion massed themselves along the parapet, with their backs to the Seine — which rolled past with a plaintive murmur — and facing the houses of Courbevoie, standing out black against the gray sky. Here and there, was a light in some one of the windows in the façades. A regiment marched past; the trampling of horses, words of command, and oaths, were mingled with the rattling of the caissons of artillery.

Joseph leaned against the parapet.

"We have a hot morning's work before us, comrade!" said a full voice, whose theatrical intonation was not unknown to the young man. "Can you give me a light for my cigar?" the voice continued.

Toussaint glanced up at the broad shoulders of the speaker, then rubbed a match on his sleeve and held it out. The match lighted the faces of the two men for a moment, and Toussaint had time to distinguish two large, black eyes, a tawny skin, and a sarcastic mouth, ornamented by a fierce moustache.

"Monsieur La Genevraie!" he exclaimed.

"And who are you, pray?" was that gentleman's reply.

"Joseph Toussaint."

As the name seemed to recall nothing to La Genevraie, Joseph continued:

"I have seen you at Bay, at Madame Sénéchal's."

"Ah! yes; to be sure. I remember. You have given up your law-studies then—to try soldiering, it seems! In what battalion are you?"

"In the Nineteenth. But how happens it, Monsieur La Genevraie, that you are here? I thought that these marching regiments received no man over forty-five."

"Never you mind how I came! I am here, and that is enough. I have good legs and good eyes, as you will soon see!"

The troops were now advancing in three parallel lines—the troops of the line, the Gardes Mobile, and the Gardes National. Above the tumult, came the regular sound of the Prussian shells, bursting on the left. This dismal sound of the bombardment of Paris, was received with a sort of savage satisfaction, by the soldiers from the provinces.

"Good!" said some of them, so that they might be heard by the Gardes National.

"Good! let them give a few of the shells now to the Parisians."

"Yes," answered a companion, "we have had quite enough of them!"

"You hear that!" grumbled La Genevaiaie. "And this is patriotism. Here are braggarts and brawlers, and there, timid peasants, whining for their stables! The Germans are right, we are, as a people, done for and exhausted!"

"This war has been a hard lesson," replied Toussaint. "If we come out of it with life, the Nation will be redeemed and regenerated!"

"You believe that, do you?" replied La Genevaiaie, scornfully. "An effete nation is never regenerated, my boy, any more than over-ripe fruit becomes green again. When this siege is over, all that is left of the population of Paris—weary of black bread—will wallow in pleasure, like so many pigs in the mire—"

"You astonish me!" interrupted Toussaint. "If these are your ideas, why are you here with your gun on your shoulder?—which, at your age, testifies to the possession of a generous and trusting nature. You astonish me! I repeat."

"My dear fellow," replied La Genevaiaie, with haughty condescension, "men like myself, are made to astonish simple fellows, such as you! I have shouldered my musket, not from conviction, nor yet from heroism. I have come here only because I am tired to death of that perpetual noise of bursting shells. I have a profound disgust for life and for myself, and my skin is not worth much. I am like an old vase, forgotten in the depths of some park, filled to overflowing by dead leaves, mould, and rain. If I am left here, with

a ball through my brain, no one will miss me; and if I come back, no one will care!"

At the foot of Mont-Valérien, the troops halted. Daylight was piercing the fog, and by the gray light, the pale, worn faces of the National Guards were to be seen. Some of them were sitting on piles of stones, awaiting the order to move on; others had lighted their pipes. A discharge of cannons from the Fort, and almost immediately, a rattling fire from the other side of Mont-Valérien.

"That seems to be the signal," said La Genevraie, calmly, as they resumed their march.

Joseph was very thoughtful. La Genevraie smoked and did not once seem to think of the weight of his knapsack.

It was about ten o'clock, when Joseph's battalion descended the slope opposite Burenvæ. In this valley, a large body of troops were assembled, waiting while the battalions slowly ascended the hill which led to the Park. . At the right, toward La Gonchere, the battle had begun. The movements could be seen through the trees and clouds of smoke, and the ambulances could be seen carrying the wounded toward the village of Fouilleuse, whose brown roofs were to be distinguished, as the fog and the smoke lifted.

Just as Joseph's battalion fell into line, a Prussian shell burst not fifty paces off. Toussaint was shaken, from head to foot, as by an electric battery.

"Baptism by fire!" cried La Genevraie.

One of the commanding officers waved his sabre in the air and cried out to his men:

"Soldiers! On to victory! The 19th must return to Paris victorious!"

"Yes," thought Joseph, sadly; "the 19th will return to Paris—nominally; but how will it be with each individual?"

The cannon and the mitrailleuses made the most infernal din, and balls came perpetually from the Prussians, sheltered behind the woods. A man in front of Joseph was struck. He fell dead, without a sound, and the others passed over him.

Joseph tried to think of Angèle; of his home, where his sister Genéviève was probably at that moment praying for him; but the common-place incidents of the march—his heavy knapsack, his gun, the sticky mud—all demanded his attention. The young man began to realize that it was not easy to philosophise at such a moment, and when he reached the brushwood, near the wall of the Park, he was utterly exhausted.

La Genevraie was as fresh as a rose—his eyes as bright, and the smile on his lips as satirical as of yore.

"Drink this, comrade," and he handed to Joseph his flask of rum. "It will bring some strength to your legs."

They sat, side by side, on the turf. Shells momentarily passed over the trees and fell among the troops, massed around de Teuilleuse. On the top of Mont-Valérien were several field pieces and a group of

officers on horseback. On the right, between the Fort and the Heights was the Seine, and, further still, Paris itself, half wrapped in fog, through which pierced occasionally a dome or a steeple. The cold was less intense than it had been. An occasional gleam of sunshine was seen, and then a few flakes of snow. Joseph offered a slice of bread to La Genevaiaie, who was listening attentively to the musketry.

"We shall not retreat," he said, "nor do I think we shall advance in a hurry. We can have a little chat and another drink."

This drink made him more expansive. He began to talk of his travels in America, of his sojourn at Bay, of the Sénéchals, and finally of Angèle, who he knew had returned to Paris.

"Do you see her often?" he asked.

Joseph replied in the affirmative.

"Poor little girl!" said La Genevaiaie. "She has never had the smallest chance. I often reproach myself for inducing Des Armoises to abandon her. By the way, is the child born yet?"

"What on earth do you mean?" said Joseph, aghast.

"I mean what I say. Des Armoises told me. Look out! You came very near catching the trigger of your gun in that bush——"

The order was now given to form again into marching order, which was silently and quickly done, and Joseph was separated from his companion. The whole battalion defiled, two by two, through a breach in the wall

and entered the wood. The discharge of musketry was now continuous and momentarily approaching. Each man held his gun steady, prepared his cartridges, and balls whistled through the branches.

There was a moment of hesitation in this body of men, to whom such scenes were so new, and whose discipline had been so brief. Some of them lost their coolness and hastily discharged their pieces, and others retreated a little to one side. Joseph marched on in the path which led to the Château de Buzenval. The poor fellow started at every ball which whistled over his head. The revelation made by La Genevraie had taken away all his courage. He could think of nothing but Angèle, and had but one wish—to escape unharmed from this place and rush to La Rue de Dragon. He, like many of his companions, now ran from tree to tree, and thus reached the edge of a little pond, partly covered by dry reeds. The walls of the château were reflected in this water. At the foot of a clump of pines, a company of troopers were sitting, waiting until they could open fire, their red breeches bright against the dark green turf.

At the sight of this handful of terrified soldiery, demoralized and running from the shower of balls, which flattened themselves against the trunks of the trees, the troopers burst into a shout of laughter.

“Well! well! green coats! You don’t seem to be quite easy in your mind!”

Joseph colored deeply. “It is true!” he said to himself; “I am a coward—a despicable coward!”

And as the troopers, at the order of their Lieutenant, resumed their march, he attached himself to them. The wood swarmed with Tirailleurs, who were doing their best to hold the ground against the Prussians. The National Guards, unaccustomed to fire, and exhausted by their long march, were perceptibly losing ground. They fell back in disorder among the trees, where they reloaded their arms. Joseph did his duty conscientiously, and stood steady at the side of an old soldier.

The Prussian fire grew hotter, and the line wavered before it and turned to run. Suddenly, a tall fellow, in the green coat of the National Guard, emerged from the wood, carrying his head high.

Joseph knew La Genevaiaie, who violently apostrophised the fugitives.

"Cowards!" he cried. "Come on!"

But no one followed him.

"Cowards! fools!" he exclaimed.

This was all. At that moment, there was a formidable discharge from the Prussians, and when the smoke lifted, La Genevaiaie was not to be seen.

Joseph quivered to the marrow of his bones. His fingers clutched his gun convulsively. To comfort himself, he spoke to his neighbor, who was kneeling by his side, half supported against a pile of stones, but when he touched his arm, Joseph discovered that he was dead. From that moment our friend knew nothing more of what took place that day. He stupidly listened to the balls, which whistled past his head, but he never

once loaded his piece. A bugle sounded the retreat, for it was growing dark.

"Come," said an officer, as he passed, "don't you hear?"

Joseph rose and slowly made his way through the underbrush, and after a time, succeeded in finding his own battalion, and then they marched back on La Fouilleuse, the Prussian shells still escorting them. At eight o'clock, they reached La Fouilleuse, and Joseph, exhausted and dying of thirst, hurried to the garden of the farm, where he knew there was a spring; but the spot was so surrounded by the impatient soldiery, that he could not get near enough to fill his flask. He slowly walked toward the farm buildings, now filled with wounded and dying men.

Ambulances were continually driving up to discharge their ghastly loads. The red light of a large lantern swinging over the gate, fell on a corner where five or six of the National Guard lay, wrapped in their long overcoats.

"Those over there are past all help!" muttered some one in the crowd.

Joseph, as if fascinated, went toward them, and the first face he saw was that of La Genevraie. The ball had passed through his heart, and in the stiffness of Death his face had preserved its haughty expression. His eyes were wide open, and under his dyed moustache, his sarcastic lips seemed still shuddering with sovereign contempt—contempt for himself, for mankind, and for Death itself.

CHAPTER XVII.

A NEW LIFE.

"**T**HANK heaven!" cried Angèle, as Joseph entered her room, the day after the events which we have attempted to describe. "I was afraid you were wounded."

"I have escaped unharmed," was his answer; "but I have seen many dreadful things."

He was very pale and haggard. He drew a chair to Angèle's side, and told her of the events of the preceding twenty-four hours. She listened breathlessly, with her eyes full of tears, as she murmured:

"How thankful I am, to see you safe! If you only knew what agonies of suspense we suffered, when we heard that your battalion had been ordered to Burenval. I started at every report of the cannons, and it seemed to me, that each shell that burst, was especially intended for you." At dark, I could bear it no longer, and rushed to church, to pray, and to burn a candle in your behalf."

"Then," said Joseph, sadly, "if I had never returned, you would have missed me a little?"

"Do you not belong to us? Alas! what would become of us, without you?"

"I am glad to hear you say this, for it gives me

courage to speak to you frankly. Where is your mother?"

"She is out, and will not return for an hour."

Joseph did not speak for a moment, then he went to Angèle and took her hands in his, and holding them firmly, he said, in a voice that trembled in spite of himself:

"Angèle, I have long wished to say something to you. Over and over again, the words have been on my lips, but I never had the courage to utter them, and there was, besides, always some interruption. This terrible war is drawing to a close. There are vague rumors of an armistice. Peace may be nearer than we imagine, and I have made up my mind to tell you what my hopes and my wishes are."

He drew a long breath, and then hurried on.

"You are alone in the world, you and your mother, and you cannot live without some protection. I am alone, too, and I love you. Will you be my wife?"

Angèle's lips parted. He arrested her words with a suppliant gesture, and continued.

"I know, only too well, how little I have to offer. I am poor and unattractive; but I will work so courageously for you, and will love you with so much tenderness, that you will not be unhappy."

Angèle pressed his hand.

"Thanks, dear friend," she said; "but it is impossible!"

"And why?"

"Because," she replied, "the woman to whom you would give your name, should be worthy to bear it, and I am not! Do you understand?"

"Perfectly!" interrupted Toussaint. "I knew it, too, from La Genevraie."

Through the dull silence of the room, came the measured ticking of the tall clock in the corner.

"I knew it," continued Joseph, quietly, "and it is only another reason for you to consent to what I ask. To be a mother, Angèle, is to bear a heavy responsibility, and one which my devotion will assist you to carry bravely. Let me aid you! I ask you this, in the name of the poor little soul, who will soon enter this hard world."

Angèle's big blue eyes were full of tears; but she shook her head.

"My best of friends," she answered, "I have given you one reason. There is still another, which is, that I love the father of my child. I do not judge him, I only say—I love him!" And she imposed silence on Toussaint by uplifted finger. "My fault is without excuse, in the eyes of the world; while, in my own, my devotion and fidelity to René, is all my salvation! No matter what happens—living or dead, René will be to me always, just what he was that evening opposite Notre Dame, when he first breathed a word of love in my ear. I love him still—blindly and faithfully, and shall always be faithful to him.

"You see," she continued, in growing excitement, "that with my heart full of his memory, there is no room for any other affection."

"Yes, I see," said Joseph, sadly, as he took up his *kepi* to depart.

Angèle realized then, how cruelly she had mortified him, and coming toward him, she held out both her hands.

"You must not go in this way!" she exclaimed. "Forgive me, if I have been too frank, and if I have wounded you. Remain our friend, and love me like a brother. The hour draws near, when I shall need a friend."

He held her hands long in his, and as he studied her haggard features, and her eyes, bright with fever, he forgot everything, in his intense pity.

"Poor little girl!" he murmured.

"No," she answered, with a faint smile, "this child will be my consolation, not a burthen. Besides," she added, with a dash of her natural levity, "he will change our luck. I feel it! But," she added, "you must promise one thing, and that is, never to tell mamma what you have just said to me. Let it be a secret between us. You see," she said, alluding to their first interview, "it was destined that there should always be secrets between us two."

Joseph went away with a heavy heart. It was as he had said, the days of the siege were numbered.

The conditions of the armistice were being drawn up, and on the 30th of January—Paris, having eaten her last ounce of black bread, learned that the capitulation was signed.

The aspect of the city was dreary enough. A thick fog covered it as with a crape veil, and hid from sight the forts so valiantly defended, now in the possession of Prussia.

The people were now gloomily discussing the conditions of the probable peace. Two thousand million ransom, the abandonment of Alsace, and of Lorraine. Joseph Toussaint keenly felt this last humiliation. It seemed to him, that his very heart strings were tugged at.

"Alas!" he said to Angèle, "when I go to visit the home of my childhood, I shall leave France behind me, and travel twenty leagues into Germany. I see now," continued the poor fellow, with an involuntary return to his figurative language, "I see how foolish it is to build one's nest on the outer limbs of a tree, that stands on the edge of a forest."

It was he who brought the first crust of white bread in that comfortless home, in La Rue du Dragon, where the two women sat and sewed all day, trying hard to get a little ahead, and have a trifling sum laid aside, for the time when Angèle's busy fingers must perforce rest for a while; but they were so poorly paid, that they rarely had more than enough for their daily needs, and

if they had, Madame Sénéchal would invariably spend it for some useless trifle, for the baby that was coming, or in some delicacy for Angèle.

One evening, Joseph went to the house. Madame Sénéchal met him on the staircase.

"She is very ill," said the mother, anxiously; but her anxiety was not so much for her daughter's health, as for her purse, which was absolutely empty.

"I do not know," she said, "what is to become of us. I have made Angèle believe that we have a little money in the house; but the truth is, that I have not three francs in the world!"

He thrust his portemonnaie into the old lady's hands and fled. His agitation was so great, that he longed to be alone.

Angèle's baby was born at daybreak. After a night of intolerable suffering, the mother's eyes rested on her boy.

"He is mine," she murmured; "all mine! Let his name be René. Send for Joseph!"

Her voice was choked by a violent cough, followed by a hemorrhage from the lungs. It seemed evident that her hours were almost numbered.

When Joseph appeared, it was past five. Angèle lay almost unconscious, as white as the linen about her.

"Joseph," she said, faintly, "is it you, my good friend? Come close to me, and tell me that I am not going to die, now that life would be so sweet to me.

We might go back to Bay, where the water rippled past my window."

She seemed to be listening for a moment, and then with a long, shivering sigh, she continued in a whisper:

"You will see what a good mother I shall make! We will bring him up in the country, where there are roses and honeysuckles. Ah! how delicious those honeysuckles were, at Vélzy."

She turned her head toward the windows, where the grey dawn was creeping in, and René's verses came to her lips:

*"Jé m'endors, et la-bas le frissonant matin
Baigne les pampres verts, d'une rougeur furtive."*

And, with these words and a faint sigh, she became unconscious. Was she dead? The mother refused to believe it. The physician was hastily summoned. He came, but shook his head. Madame Sénéchal entreated him piteously to save her daughter's life. The good man sent her from the room, and bade her take care of the child, while he did his best for the apparently dying young mother.

Madame Sénéchal vehemently declared that she hated the child—that his birth had deprived her of her daughter. Joseph, half blinded by tears, led her away to the next room, where on a table lay the dirty pack of cards which had so often been consulted, and which had never failed to prophesy such golden days for Angèle in the future.

In breathless anxiety they awaited the summons from the physician, who came at last to tell them that he saw a faint ray of hope.

It is needless to dwell on this season of anxiety and sorrow. The pale, young mother struggled back to life, and after a few weeks, was able to thank Joseph for his faithful devotion. Angèle was changed—utterly changed—gentler and more submissive to her mother, as well as more appreciative of Joseph's unselfishness.

Later, as better days dawned on France, Joseph—thanks to the protection of his old patron again—obtained a good position as secretary, and then he ventured once more to ask Angèle to become his wife, promising to bestow on her son, his own name and a father's care. Angèle could no longer refuse.

"I am unworthy," she said, with tears in her eyes; but I will try and make you a good wife."

The famous Morel fortune was never received from the Malayan Archipelago, but an aunt of Angèle—an old maid, who had acquired a little property by making dresses for the ladies at Bay—died and left to Madame Sénéchal fifteen thousand francs.

The old lady lived with her children, but found her greatest happiness in her grandson, and as little René grew ruddy and strong, Madame Sénéchal again began, in his honor, to take her little trips into the land of fancy and unreality.

Leaning over the boy's cradle like the old fairy godmother in nursery tales, she drew the most wonderful horoscopes, declaring that the cards said he would make a great figure in the world. Toussaint smiled half sadly at this, for he saw in these tiny features only a startling likeness to the mother, whose life had been so sad, and who had only lately, after many storms and threatened shipwrecks, drifted into a harbor of refuge. If she was not radiantly happy, she was at least calmly content, living with her mother, her husband and her child—fulfilling her simple round of daily duties.

In September, 1874, Joseph went to Lorraine, on family business, and took with him little René; on his way back, he could not resist the temptation of lingering a few hours at Bay. He left the cars, therefore, at that station, and, leading René by the hand, passed slowly through La Rue des Sauveurs, where Lawyer Boblique's sign still shone in the sun, and so on down to the bridge, which commanded a view of the ogives of the church, the slumbrous waters of the canal, and the black façades of the houses in La Rue des Savonnaires.

Nothing was changed. The water swashed against the piers, with the same sound as of yore, and through the open window of the room he had occupied, flowed the curtain, precisely as it did the first day he saw the place. As Joseph stood there, it seemed to him that

Angèle must appear on that balcony, among the flowers, with her graceful figure, chestnut hair and sunny blue eyes. He lifted the boy to show him the water, and as he did so, the sound of approaching footsteps caused him to look round; he started, as his eyes fell on René des Armoises, who was lounging across the bridge.

The poet recognized Joseph, and his face wore a mingled expression of annoyance and shame. His eyes fell on the child, who was playing with some bright leaves he had gathered. Little René was so exactly like his mother, that Des Armoises had not a moment's doubt. His heart gave a great leap, and then seemed dead within him. With colorless, trembling lips, he tried to speak, but Joseph interrupted him.

"You see," he said "that I am making a pilgrimage to Monsieur Sénéchal's old house."

There was a long embarrassed silence.

The poet was watching the child, and all this time Joseph was examining with surprise, the very marked change which he detected in the person of his old friend. He had grown stout, his features had lost all their delicacy, and his eyes were full of melancholy discontent.

"You find me changed, I see?" he said bitterly. "What would you have? We must all grow old."

Then with an interest which was evidently feigned, he questioned Toussaint as to his own prospects, and those of Paris. They touched on Politics a little, and

on the Theatre and Literature not at all, nor did the name of Angèle once pass the lips of either of these men.

"But you write still?" said Joseph. "How is it that I never see your name now-a-days? Are you like one of those trees, which after an abundant harvest, suddenly cease to yield any fruit?"

Des Armoises smiled sadly.

"I am," he said, "like a tree which is suddenly cut off from fresh air and sunshine. These black walls — this life kills me — and my branches flower no more. How do you suppose that I can write in a house overrun with children, and amid the gossip and miserable details of a provincial life."

"But why don't you return to Paris?"

"Because my chains are well riveted. This war has ruined us. I have two children, a wife who is out of temper because she is out of the world, a father-in-law whom the fall of the Empire has reduced to idiocy, a mother who became embittered and soured, by disappointment and reverses. I live in my house like a toad in an old wall!"

Again he examined little René, whose wide-open childish eyes were riveted on him in astonishment.

"Farewell," exclaimed des Armoises. "I do not ask you to come and see us. The house is dreary, the children are spoiled, and my wife is ill. Ah! you know nothing about it. Farewell!"

Joseph looked after him as he walked away, and remembered the brilliant René des Armoises whom he had first seen in that musty lawyer's office — so young and gay, so hopeful and confident! Could this be the same? This man with slouching gait, round shoulders, and careless dress. Joseph felt a profound pity, and lifting the child, he went toward the station bearing him in his arms.

THE END.

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